April 27, 1987

THE NEW YORKER

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

PLAYS AND MUSICALS

All My Sons—A revival of Arthur Miller's 1947 play, with Richard Kiley. Directed by Arvin Brown. Opens Wednesday, April 22, at 6:30. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Asinamali!—A drama written and directed by South African playwright Mbongeni Ngema which was seen last fall at Lincoln Center's "Woza Afrika!" festival. With the original cast. Previews Wednesday, April 22. Opens officially on Thursday, April 23. (Jack Lawrence, 359 W. 48th St. 307-5452. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8; opening-night curtain at 6:45. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Barbara Cook: A Concert for the Theatre—A one-woman show. (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3.)

Blithe Spirit—This revival of Noël Coward's comedy is an almost total miss, a waste of the talents of Geraldine Page and Blythe Danner, among others. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/13/87.) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 757-8646. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Broadway Bound—A rueful comedy in which Neil Simon studies the middle-class depths from which he sprang and has kept springing. The cast includes Linda Lavin, Jonathan Silverman, John Randolph, Philip Sterling, Jason Alexander, and Phyllis Newman. The director is Gene Saks. (12/15/86) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

Coastal Disturbances—Tina Howe's funny and beautiful play about love is set on a private beach on Massachusetts' North Shore. Annette Bening, as a photographer from this city, and Timothy Daly, as a lifeguard, are the beguiling lovers, and among the other actors, as summer people, are Rosemary Murphy, Jonas Abry, Heather Mac Rae, and Ronald Guttman. Carole Rothman is the able director. (12/1/86) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The Colored Museum—A sharp, satiric revue on the subject of blackness and related matters, which is almost done in by damnable sound amplification. George C. Wolfe was the clever writer, and L. Kenneth Richardson the able director. The performers, all of them splendid, are Loretta Devine, Tommy Hollis, Reggie Montgomery, Vickilyn Reynolds, and Danitra Vance. Miss Vance will not be in the cast on Saturday, April 25. (11/10/86) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

The Common Pursuit—An English import. Six Cambridge undergraduates, in the sixties, plan to launch a literary magazine in accordance with the rigorous standards of the critic F. R. Leavis, and in the ensuing twenty years manage to breach these standards. Simon Gray's play, while not especially original, is consistently entertaining, and it is very well performed under the direction of the dramatist and Michael McGuire. (11/3/86) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

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Crackwalker—A play by Judith Thompson, who co-directed with James Abar. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 760-9810. Wednesday through Saturday at 8, and Sunday at 7. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 3. Closes Sunday, April 26.)

Driving Miss Daisy—Alfred Uhry's play is more a sentimental than a dramatic occasion, which tells, in a series of brief scenes, of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. What gives the evening distinction is the performance—the fine acting of Dana Ivey and Morgan Freeman, under Ron Lagomarsino's deft direction. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Equity Library Theatre—A revival of Shaw's **misalliance** is the seventh in this season's series of eight productions. (Equity Library Theatre, 103rd St. and Riverside Dr. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30. Closes Sunday, May 3. For information about tickets, for which contributions are requested, call 663-2028.)

Fences—August Wilson's play about a black garbageman, formerly a baseball player of professional calibre, is as powerful as, and even richer than, his "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom." The triumphant performance, with James Earl Jones in the leading role, supported by Mary Alice, Courtney B. Vance, Frankie R. Faison, Ray Aranha, Charles Brown, and Karima Miller, was directed by Lloyd Richards. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for the best play of the year. (4/6/87) (46th Street Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

A Girl's Guide to Chaos—A comedy by Cynthia Heimel. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 869-4731. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Groucho: A Life in Revue—A surprisingly lively and touching show about the great comedian/humorist. Frank Ferrante's dedicated impersonation becomes a true performance, and Les Marsden, doubling, comes close to Chico and seems inspired as Harpo. Arthur Marx (son of Groucho) and Robert Fisher were the playwrights; Mr. Marx directed. (10/20/86) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Jackie Mason's "The World According to Me!"—Jackie Mason's material consists almost entirely of outrageous insults addressed to

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Jews, Italians, Poles, Puerto Ricans, and Wasps. For more than thirty years, Mason's audiences—that is, his victims—have found him hilarious, and the sorry truth of the matter is that he *is* hilarious. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3.)

Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill—A play of sorts about one of Billie Holiday's last engagements, at a night club in Philadelphia. (9/29/86) (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 6. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Les Liaisons Dangereuses—The Royal Shakespeare Company's production of a new play by Christopher Hampton, based on the 1782 novel of the same name by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos. Directed by Howard Davies. Previews through Wednesday, April 29. Opens officially on Thursday, April 30. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8; opening-night curtain at 6:15. Matinées Saturdays at 2.)

Me and My Girl—A fifty-year-old British musical once starred in by Lupino Lane. His worthy successor is Robert Lindsay, who in his day has played Hamlet and can evidently play anything. (8/25/86) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 947-0033. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The Meeting—A play by Jeff Stetson. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 598-0400. Wednesdays through Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3. Closes Sunday, May 3.)

The Mikado—This marvellous production comes to us from Stratford, Ontario; it is lovely to look at, delightful to hear. Brian Macdonald was the inspired director. (4/13/87) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 977-9370. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

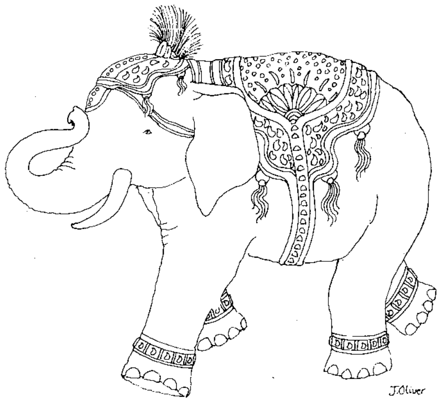
Les Misérables—Colm Wilkinson is a strong Jean Valjean and Terrence Mann is his strong pursuer Javert in this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel, which comes to us from France by way of England. The real standouts of the production, however, are the settings, by John Napier, and the lighting, by David Hersey. But even these, remarkable though they are, are not sustaining enough for the three and a half hours that the show runs. (3/23/87) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Wednesday, April 22, at 2:30.)

The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940—A whodunit, written and directed by John Bishop. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The Nerd—This farce by the late Larry Shue (author of "The Foreigner") is a source of laughter from beginning to end. It tells the story of an idiotic young man who almost becomes the permanent house guest of an inoffensive architect. Robert Joy gives a first-rate comic performance in the title role. (4/6/87) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

On the Verge—A diverting little comedy by Eric Overmyer, about three Victorian lady explorers who travel through time (from the eighteen-eighties to 1955) over terra incognita. Lisa Banes, Patricia Hodges, and Laura Hicks play the indomitable heroines, and Tom Robbins plays everybody they meet on their journey. Garland Wright was the able director. Scenery, costumes, and lighting, all commendable, were designed by John Arnone, Ann Hould-Ward, and James F. Ingalls, respectively. (3/30/87) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 967-9077. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3. Closes Sunday, May 3.)

Pygmalion—Peter O'Toole, Amanda Plummer, and John Mills in a revival of Shaw's play. Val May is the director. Previews through Saturday, April 25. Opens officially on Sunday, April 26. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8; opening-night curtain at 6.) Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)



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The Regard of Flight—Bill Irwin, sublime clown, acrobat, mime, and juggler, is appearing here for a limited engagement with his two stalwart partners, Doug Skinner and M. C. O'Connor. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Wednesday through Saturday at 8, and Sunday at 7:30. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 2. Closes Sunday, April 26.)

Sex Tips for Modern Girls—A musical with a book by Peter Eliot Weiss and a score and lyrics by John Sereda. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3. Closes Sunday, May 3.)

South Pacific—This production, by the New York City Opera, is haunted by the original, and apparently irreplaceable, performance; nevertheless, the score and lyrics and book are strong enough to carry it. This time, the stars are Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, and Joshua Logan. (3/16/87) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Wednesday through Saturday at 8. Matinées Wednesday and Saturday at 2, and Sunday at 3. Closes Sunday, April 26.)

Staggerlee—A bountiful, joyous jazz musical, with a rhythm-and-blues score and lyrics by the prodigiously gifted Allen Toussaint, and an artful, entertaining book by Vernel Bagneris, who also contributed the additional lyrics. The setting is a Southern city during Mardi Gras. The witty, vivid scenery, lighting, and costumes were designed by Akira Yoshimura, Allen Lee Hughes, and JoAnn Clevenger, respectively. Mr. Bagneris directed the prodigiously gifted black company, which is headed by Ruth Brown, Adam Wade, and Marva Hicks. (3/30/87) (Second Avenue Theatre, 189 Second Ave., at 12th St. 674-1460. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Stardust—The lyrics of Mitchell Parish, as sung and performed by an engaging company of three men and three women. The composers (over the past sixty-five years or so) include Duke Ellington, Hoagy Carmichael, and Leroy Anderson. The singers include André De Shields and, most notably, Michele Bautier. (3/2/87) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 582-5340. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Starlight Express—A bore on roller skates. (3/30/87) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Sweet Sue—A failed comedy by A. R. Gurney, Jr., about a divorced artist in middle age and a young man who is her son's roommate at college. Four actors (Mary Tyler Moore, Lynn Redgrave, Barry Tubb, and John K. Linton) portray this woebegone couple, who love neither wisely nor too well. (1/19/87) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The Widow Claire—Horton Foote continues to explore the lives of the citizens of Harrison, Texas. The principal characters here are a racy, nervous widow and young Horace Robedaux. (12/29/86) (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Women Beware Women—A drama by Howard Barker, based on the seventeenth-century play of the same name by Thomas Middleton. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30.)

York Theatre Company—Presenting **SHYLOCK**, a musical adaptation by Ed Dixon of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." Score by Mr. Dixon (who will perform the role of Shylock) and words by the Bard. Previews Thursday and Friday, April 23-24. Opens officially on Saturday, April 25, and will run through Sunday, May 3. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Thursdays and Fridays and Tuesday and Wednesday, April 28-29, at 8; Saturday, April 25, at 6:30 and 9; Sunday, April 26, at 5:30 and 8:30; Saturday, May 2, at 8:30; and Sunday, May 3, at 5. For information about tickets, call 534-5366.)

Long Runs—**BIG RIVER:** A musical version of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Twain's great novel has been respectfully dealt with in a book by William Hauptman, with music and lyrics by Roger Miller. Heidi Landesman has somehow managed to put the Mississippi River onstage. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **LA CAGE AUX FOLLES:** A dazzling production of a musical that has little wit and a lot of phony sentimentality about the tenderhearted family life of homosexuals. The music, by Jerry Herman, is Broadway-romantic. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 757-2626. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **CATS:** Ezra Pound nicknamed T. S. Eliot "Old Possum," and under that name Eliot wrote a collection of poems about cats, and now the cats are on display on Broadway, with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, scenery and costumes by John Napier, and direction by Trevor Nunn. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **A CHORUS LINE:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **DROOD:** Old-fashioned mock-Victorian nonsense, with book and songs by Rupert Holmes and direction by Wilford Leach. The cast is headed by George Rose. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** 11,232 performances so far. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **42ND STREET:** Once upon a time there was a silly-wonderful Warner Brothers musical about a young hoofer who goes on in place of a disabled star and herself becomes a star overnight. The legitimate musical that has been fashioned from the movie musical is just as silly but by no means as wonderful. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 398-0280. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **I'M NOT RAPPAPORT:** Herb Gardner's synthetic, though often entertaining, comedy about two old men who share a bench in Cen-

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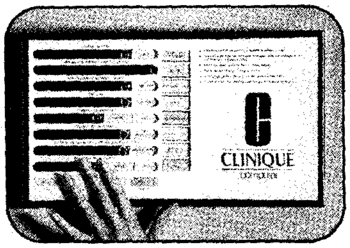

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tral Park, starring Ossie Davis and Hal Linden. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS:** Based on Roger Corman's 1960 horror quickie about a man-eating plant, this exuberant, jokey musical is wholly free of camp. The score is by Alan Menken, and Howard Ashman directed and wrote the book and lyrics. Martin P. Robinson designed the menacing plant. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Sundays at 2 and 5.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **OH! CALCUTTA!:** A collection of short sketches that purport to give us a refreshing view of sex and do not. (Edison, 240 W. 47th St. 302-2302. Mondays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 9:30; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3.)

MISCELLANY

The Circus—Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's hundred-and-seventeenth edition. (Madison Square Garden. 564-4400. Wednesday, April 22, at 2 and 7:30; Thursdays at 10:30 and 7:30; Fridays at 2 and 7:30; Saturdays at 10:30, 2:30, and 7:30; Sundays at 1 and 5:30; and Wednesday, April 29, at 7:30. Closes Sunday, May 17.)

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Tentative schedule of opening performances of an engagement that will run through Sunday, June 28—Tuesday evening, April 28: "Concerto Barocco," "Prodigal Son," and "Fanfare." . . . ¶ Wednesday evening, April 29: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Valse Triste," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," and "Gounod Symphony." . . . ¶ Thursday evening, April 30: "La Source," "Prodigal Son," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." . . . ¶ Friday evening, May 1: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Pas de Deux," "Sinfonia Mistica," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ Saturday matinée, May 2: "Prodigal Son," "Valse Triste," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, May 2: "Concerto Barocco," "Sinfonia Mistica," and "Gounod Symphony." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Evenings at 8. Matinées at 2.)

American Ballet Theatre—Wednesday matinée and evening, April 22; Thursday and Friday evenings, April 23-24; and Saturday matinée and evening, April 25: "The Sleeping Beauty." . . . ¶ Monday evening, April 27: "Paquita," "Sylvia Pas de Deux," "The Leaves Are Fading," and "Bourrée Fantasque." . . . ¶ Tuesday evening, April 28: "Les Rendezvous," "Duets," "Sylvia Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ Wednesday matinée, April 29: "Paquita," "Duets," "Sylvia Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ Wednesday evening, April 29: "Paquita," "The Leaves Are Fading," and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ Thursday evening, April 30: "Les Rendezvous," "Pillar of Fire," and "Bourrée Fantasque." . . . ¶ Friday evening, May 1: "Enough Said" (New York première), "Pillar of Fire," and "Bourrée Fantasque." . . . ¶ Saturday matinée, May 2: "Duets," "Sylvia Pas de Deux," "The Leaves Are Fading," and "Bourrée Fantasque." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, May 2: "Donizetti Variations," "The Leaves Are Fading," and "Bourrée Fantasque." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Evenings at 8. Matinées at 2. Through Saturday, June 13.)

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Paul Taylor Dance Company—Wednesday evening, April 22, and Thursday evening, April 30: "Arden Court," "Private Domain," and "A Musical Offering." . . . ¶ Thursday evening, April 23: "Roses," "Diary of a Fly" (première), "Dust," and "Airs." . . . ¶ Friday evening, April 24: "Esplanade," "Profiles," "Aureole," and "Syzygy." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, April 25, and Friday evening, May 1: "Ab Ovo Usque ad Mala (From Soup to Nuts)," "Paean" (première), "Polaris," and "Mercuric Tidings." . . . ¶ Sunday matinée, April 26: "Arden Court," "Faun Variations" (première), "Private Domain," and "A Musical Offering." . . . ¶ Tuesday evening, April 28, and Saturday evening, May 2: "Images," "Last Look," and "Kith and Kin" (première). . . . ¶ Wednesday evening, April 29: "Cloven Kingdom," "Snow White," "The Edge" (première), "Junction," and "Sunset." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 246-8989. Evenings at 8. Matinées at 3. Through Sunday, May 17.)

Jennifer Muller & the Works—Wednesday, April 22, and Sunday, April 26, at 7:30, and Saturday, April 25, at 8: "Interrupted River," "Into the Life," and "Tub." . . . ¶ Thursday and Friday, April 23-24, at 8, and Sunday, April 26, at 2: "Darkness and Light." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Molissa Fenley and Dancers—A one-week engagement—Tuesday, April 28, and Sunday, May 3, at 7:30, and Friday, May 1, at 8: "Cenotaph," "Eidetic Body," "Separate Voices" (première), and "Energizer." . . . ¶ Wednesday, April 29, and Saturday, May 2, at 8: "Geologic Moments." . . . ¶ Thursday, April 30, at 8, and Sunday, May 3, at 2: "Second Sight" and "Esperanto." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

NIGHT LIFE

(A highly arbitrary listing in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**JULIE WILSON** is back in the Oak Room, concentrating on the music of Arthur Schwartz and the lyrics of three of his collaborators—Howard Dietz, Dorothy Fields, and Johnny Mercer. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—**BLOSSOM DEARIE** has a wee girl's voice but it is expressive and her diction is impeccable, and the songs she chooses to sing ("My Attorney, Bernie," "Bye-Bye Country Boy," "Bruce") are perfectly suited to her. Early-evening concerts at six-thirty Wednesdays through Saturdays.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A large, carpeted, bemirrored jazz club with a spectacular piece of neon art on the back wall (the Manhattan skyline and attendant celestial bodies) and with clusters of musicians on the dais. Singers are in the ascendant now. **SARAH VAUGHAN,** attended by a trio, sings in her own eccentric, dazzling megastar way through Sunday, April 26, and on Tuesday, April 28, **PHYLLIS HYMAN** steps up. Music after nine. Dining.

J. Capa

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Music for many kinds of people, including unreconstructed folkies, beboppers, urban cowboys, and members of the **THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS** fan club. There are two Giants, both of about average size: **JOHN LINNELL,** who plays accordion and saxophone and has a basso-profundo voice, and **JOHN FLANSBURGH,** who sings and plays guitar while doing an imitation of a dorky guy on amphetamines pretending to be a rock star. They conduct a sing-along of "Hope That I Get Old Before I Die" with cue cards, sing a dark, sub-romantic song called "She's an Angel" in the dark, and use nutty props to get laughs. They're a vaudeville team, but some of their songs, stuffed with puns and nonsense and almost deep thoughts, appear to have been written by two clever guys who might be poets. You can listen to their latest number by calling their Dial-a-Song service (1-718 387-6962), and you can see them here on Sunday, April 26, at seven-thirty and ten-thirty. The rest of the lineup: Wednesday, April 22, **BUSTER POINDEXTER & THE BANSHEES OF BLUE;** Friday, April 24, **JOHN HARTFORD;** Monday, April 27, a benefit concert for the homeless, with **PHOEBE SNOW,** Buster Poindexter, and others; and Tuesday, April 28, **ARTIE TRAUM** & the Cayenne band. Shows Mondays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A real New York bar: it has dark wood panelling, Type A conversationalists, and some very good pianists (who play the very beautiful concert grand that Paul Desmond bequeathed to the proprietor) and bassists. **ROGER KELLAWAY,** a dashing, wide-ranging pianist who likes to surprise you in the midst of his not-quite-striding version of "Ain't Misbehavin' " by splattering the upper register with his elbow, works with Russell George through Saturday, April 25, and on Monday, April 27, **MIKE LONGO** and Ben Brown get going. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlos I, 432 Sixth Ave., at 10th St. (982-3260)—It's so nice in here—silken woodwork and long tables with pink tablecloths and pink napkins—you might mistake it for a jazz club on a movie set but for the real musicians onstage. Trumpeter, flugelhornist, and singer-mumbler **CLARK TERRY** leads his quintet through Sunday, April 26. **CARRIE SMITH** lends her deep, rich, down-in-the-valley voice to the proceedings the last three nights. Mondays are reserved for the father-and-son guitar team of **BUCKY** and **JOHN PIZZARELLI.** Music from nine every night but Monday, when it begins at eight. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**BOBBY SHORT,** a prince among café singers, is presiding over the little principality known as the Café Carlyle. Bassist **BEVERLY PEER** and drummer **ROBBIE SCOTT** are his aides. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at ten and midnight. . . . ¶ Over in the Bemelmans Bar, Ludwig Bemelmans' rabbits perform everyday stunts on the walls and **BARBARA CARROLL** sings and plays the piano Tuesdays through Saturdays from nine-forty-five.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—A belowstairs, almost plush, mostly mainstream-jazz room. A quartet guided by the Belgian harmonica whiz, whistler, and guitarist **TOOTS THIELEMANS** will be on hand through Sunday, April 26, and starting Tuesday, April 28, the Danish hot-jazz violinist **SVEND ASMUSSEN** will work with a rhythm section led by drummer **MEL LEWIS.** Mondays remain the property of guitarist, recording innovator, and raconteur **LES PAUL.** Music from eight Tuesdays through Sundays, and from nine on Mondays. Dining.

Gregory's, 1149 First Ave., at 63rd St. (371-2220)—A tiny jazz outpost in swinging-singles country. Stan Edwards sings with support from pianist Larry Intorella and bassist

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David Sibley Mondays and Wednesday through Saturday, April 22-25; Ellington scholar and stride ace **BROOKS KERR** is at the upright on Sundays; and guitarist **CHUCK WAYNE'S** trio is on duty on Tuesdays. Music from about ten.

KNICKERBOCKER SALOON, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A pleasant, low-key bar and restaurant in the piano-bass district. **BILL MAYS** and John Goldsby collaborate through Saturday, April 25, and on Tuesday, April 28, Ray Gallon and **RON CARTER** take charge. Music from about nine-thirty.

LONE STAR CAFÉ, 61 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. (242-1664)—Scary-movie buffs like the epic-size iguana on the roof of this establishment; Texans like the reminders of home; and the musicians like the Texans, the New Yorkers, and the other visitors from this planet who regularly fill the joint up. Wednesday and Thursday, April 22-23, blues guitarist **ALBERT KING;** Friday and Saturday, April 24-25, Western-swing revivalists **ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL;** Sunday and Monday, April 26-27, the **GOLDEN PALOMINOS;** and Tuesday and Wednesday, April 28-29, Hattiesburg, Miss., rocker **WEBB WILDER & THE BEATNECKS** and Meridian, Miss., rocker **STEVE FORBERT,** who will sing Buddy Holly songs with the Crickets. Music after nine. Dinin'.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—From the glassed-in streetside room, you can see the tubbed saplings in the adjacent office-tower frontage, and in the back room, which is where all the action is, you can see Dory Previn. She sings Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine and eleven. On Mondays, the New Orleans Funeral and Ragtime Orchestra saves the clarinettist's chair for Woody Allen. Closed Sundays. Dining.

MIKELL'S, 760 Columbus Ave., at 97th St. (864-8832)—A popular, north-of-chic upper West Side gathering place where, however, because of the city's Prohibition-age cabaret laws, you will now find no more than three musicians gathered together at one time. **CARMEN LUNDY,** a bright young jazz singer, will be here on Friday and Saturday, April 24-25. Music from about ten until two. Dining.

RITZ, 119 E. 11th St. (254-2800)—Rock and roll of the Present Moment—and, occasionally, of the Classical Era (the fifties), the Romantic Era (the sixties), and the OPEC Era (the seventies)—in a big, fancy thirties-era ballroom. Friday, April 24, Mission UK; Saturday, April 25, Oingo Boingo; Sunday, April 26, **TOM VERLAINE;** and Saturday, May 2, Shriekback. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at nine, and Fridays and Saturdays at eleven.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Tropical-forest décor (including a larger-than-life parrot suspended above the bandstand) and head-swirling music from Brazil, Africa, the Caribbean, and the U.S.A. Wednesday and Thursday, April 22-23, pianist **EDDIE PALMIERI** and his salsa and jazz band; Friday and Saturday, April 24-25, **MIKATA;** Tuesday, April 28, Little Village, with keyboardist **BOB TELSON,** who wrote the score for "The Gospel at Colonus;" Wednesday and Thursday, April 29-30, **JOHNNY COPELAND** & his African blues band; and Friday, May 1, at seven-thirty and ten, **LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO,** the sublime South African a-cappella group. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays and from eleven on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—According to Pliny the Elder, sweet basil mixed with rose oil and vinegar and applied as a liniment relieves headache and fatigue. No ailment-specific claim can be made for the **JAZZTET**—a sextet co-directed by the pensive, lyrical flugelhornist **ART FARMER** and tenor saxophonist **BENNY GOLSON,** the composer of such standards as "Whisper Not" and "I Remember Clifford"—but something like wellness may overtake you during one of its sets. The group plays here through Sunday, April 26, and on Tuesday, April 28, tenor saxophonist **DAVID MURRAY** brings in his octet. **DAKOTA STATON** sings the blues on Monday, April 27. Music from about ten. Dining.

TRAMPS, 125 E. 15th St. (777-5077)—A simple basic blues and rock club, now a venerable ten years old. Thursday, April 23, Golden Palominos' singer Syd Straw & Friends and the Greg Trooper band; Friday and Saturday, April 24-25, blues saxophonist **A. C. REED** & his Spark Plugs; Sunday, April 26, the Surreal McCoys and the Josie Kuhn band; Monday, April 27, Infradig and the Funky Knights; Thursday, April 30, **LIL' ED,** the young, all-smiles Chicago-blues guitarist and singer, and his **BLUES IMPERIALS;** and Friday and Saturday, May 1-2, R. & B. vet **LOWELL FULSOM.** Shows after nine-thirty.

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VILLAGE GATE, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—Peppy salsa bands play for their excitable fans in the gym-size downstairs room on Mondays after nine. On April 27, **MICHAL URBANIAK,** who plays a voice-activated violin, will take a solo turn or two with bands led by **OSCAR D'LEON** and **JOSÉ ALBERTO.** Dancing under the spinning mirrored ball. . . . ¶ One flight up, in the Terrace Bar, you can watch the world drift by on roller skates, skateboards, bicycles, unicycles, and Harley-Davidsons, and listen to pianist **HERMAN FOSTER,** who works with bassist **MICHAEL FORMANEK** through Sunday, April 26, and with **JAY LEONHART** starting Tuesday, April 28. Music from around ten.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Perhaps the most famous basement in the world, now in its second half century, has been described by Max Gordon, the wise, elfin, cigar-smoking proprietor, as "a good joint that people like to come to—thank God." A first-rate trio in the form of pianist **TOMMY FLANAGAN,** bassist **GEORGE MRAZ,** *and drummer* **AL FOSTER** *performs through* Sunday, April 26, and on Tuesday, April 28, **FRANK MORGAN,** a California-based alto saxophonist who grew up in the bebop era under the influence of Charlie Parker, moves in with his quartet. Mondays are blast-off nights for the **MEL LEWIS ORCHESTRA.** Music from ten.

WEST END, 2911 Broadway, at 113th St. (666-8750)—Past the steam tables of piping-hot student food, beyond the pinball machines and the jukebox is a room full of jazz. Tenor saxophonist **BIG NICK NICHOLAS** leads his quartet through Sunday, April 26, and on Wednesday, April 29, percussionist **RAY MANTILLA** arrives with his combo, which features **DICK OATTS,** one of Mel Lewis's men, on alto saxophone. Shows from about nine.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A bright, spacious bar and restaurant with an in-between room from which music issues, putting an end to some discussions and inspiring others. Guitarist **JOE BECK** will be around most nights, trading ideas with pianist **LONNIE SMITH** (through Saturday, April 25) or pianist **JOHN HICKS** (Monday through Thursday, April 27-30) or bassist **STEVE LA SPINA** (Friday and Saturday, May 1-2). On Sunday, April 26, **HILTON RUIZ** and **JIMMY ROWSER** play piano-bass duets. Music weeknights from eight and Sundays from seven.

JAZZ / FOLK / ROCK CONCERTS, PERSONAL APPEARANCES, ETC.

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE—Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. Wednesday through Saturday, April 22-25, at 10:30. For information about tickets, call 249-8870.

STANLEY JORDAN, BOBBY McFERRIN, AND MICHEL PETRUCCIANI—Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Saturday, April 25, at 8.

ERIC CLAPTON—With Robert Cray. (Madison Square Garden. 564-4400. Monday, April 27, at 8.)

DON CHERRY—Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Friday, May 1, at 8.

DELTON BROUSSARD AND CALVIN CARRIERE—With the Lawtell Playboys. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Friday, May 1, at 8. For information about tickets, call 206-1050.)

WAYNE SHORTER QUINTET—With Jack De Johnette's Special Edition and Lester Bowie. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Saturday, May 2, at 8.)

BROOKLYN BRIDGES THE WORLD—BAM salutes the King's borough with a four-day festival of music and dance, starring current Brooklynites, native Brooklynites, and others who have passed through on their way to the beach. Performances take place in one of three places under the BAM roof: the Opera House, the Carey Playhouse, or the Lepercq Space. Ben Vereen, Thursday, April 23, at 8. . . . ¶ Lester Bowie's Jazz Fantasia, Friday, April 24, at 8. . . . ¶ The Ray Barretto Orchestra and Bobby Sanabria & Ascensión, Friday, April 24, at 8. . . . ¶ Vernon Reid's Living Colour and Subculture 9, Friday, April 24, at 8. . . . ¶ Eye & I and the Jerome Harris group, Friday, April 24, at 11. . . . ¶ The Persuasions, the Capris, the Harptones, and the Jive Five, Saturday, April 25, at 8. . . . ¶ Richie Havens and Tom Chapin, Saturday, April 25, at 8. . . . ¶ Danitra Vance & the Mell-O White Boys and Lunatune, Saturday, April 25, at 8 and 11. . . . ¶ The Original Klezmer Jazz Band, John Nolan All-Ireland Band, Thuli Dumakude & Izwe, and Larry Laurenzano's Italian Festival Band, Sunday, April 26, at 2. . . . ¶ Roots of Brasil, the Shango Haitian Folklore Group, Patakin, and Garifuna Ibayani, Sunday, April 26, at 2. . . . ¶ Donny and Eileen Golden & the Golden School of Traditional Irish Dancing, the Polish American Folk Dance Company, the Ibrahim Farrah Near East Dancers, and the Parparim Dance Ensemble, Sunday, April 26, at 5. . . . ¶ Noel Pointer and the Institutional Radio Choir, Sunday, April 26, at 8. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100.)

ART

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

GREGORY AMENOFF—Large, richly painted abstract canvases. Through Wednesday, April 29. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

GUY BARDONE—Brilliant-colored oils of still-lifes and landscapes, the latter including the French Riviera and the Jura Mountains. Through Saturday, May 2. (David Findlay, 984 Madison Ave., at 77th St. Open Mondays.)

BYRON BROWNE (1907-61)—Collages by an early abstractionist. Through May 12. (Schlesinger-Boisanté, 822 Madison Ave., at 69th St. Open Mondays.)

JEAN DUBUFFET (1901-85)—A two-gallery retrospective of paintings, sculptures, and works on paper. Those dating from 1943 to 1974 at Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. (Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.) Through May 29. . . . ¶ Those made in 1975 and after at Pace, 32 E. 57th St. Starts Friday, April 24.

THÉODORE GÉRICAULT (1791-1824)—Paintings, drawings, and prints, many on loan from museums and private collections. Through May 23. (Salander-O'Reilly, 22 E. 80th St. Open Mondays.)

JOHN GUNDELFINGER—Rhapsodic paintings of the Delaware River Valley. Through Wednesday, April 29. (Perlow, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

RAOUL HAGUE—Eight large abstract sculptures in walnut and one in cherry. Through Saturday, May 2. (Fourcade, 36 E. 75th St.)

ALEXEJ JAWLENSKY (1864-1941) **AND ANDREAS**

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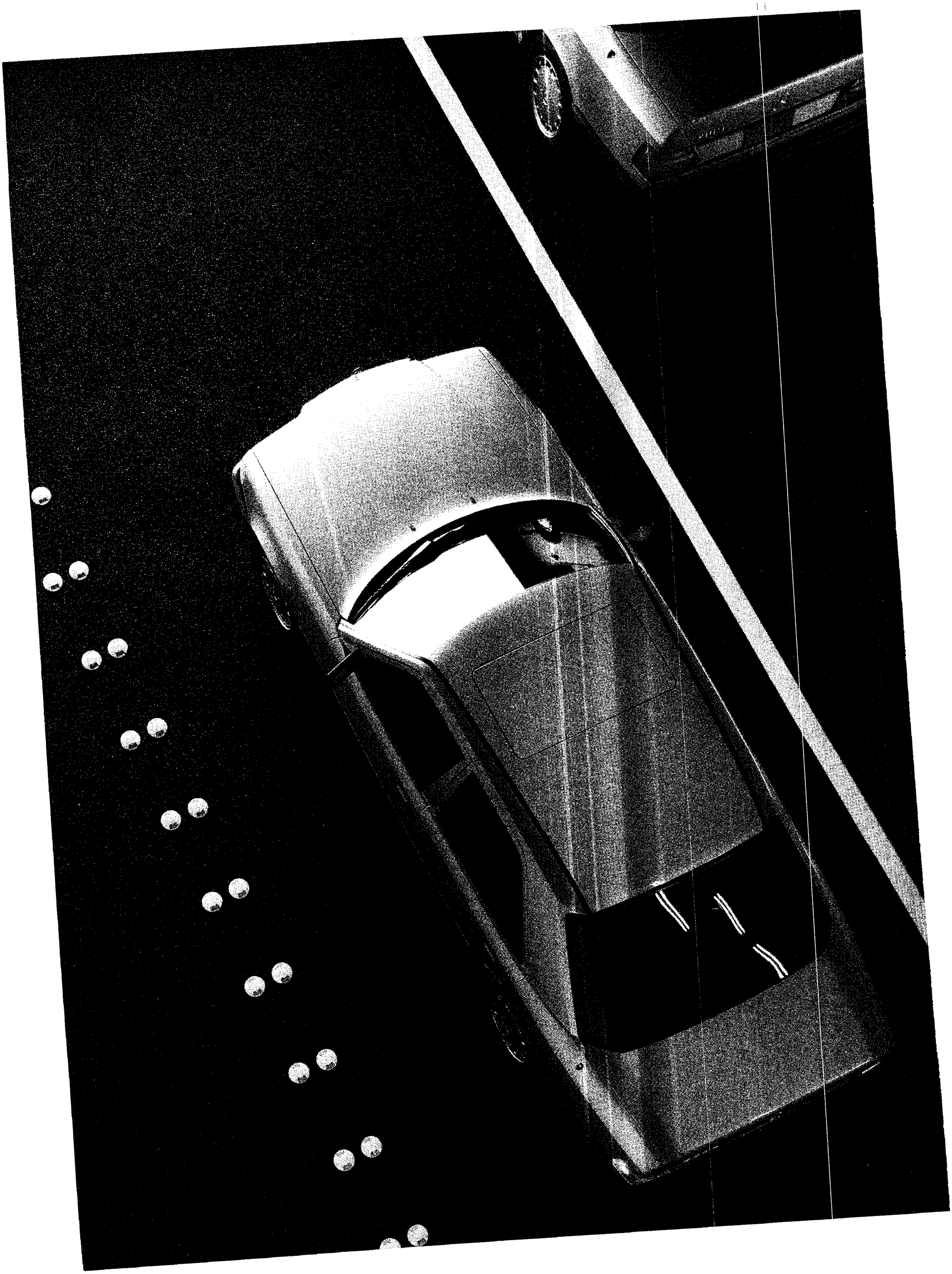

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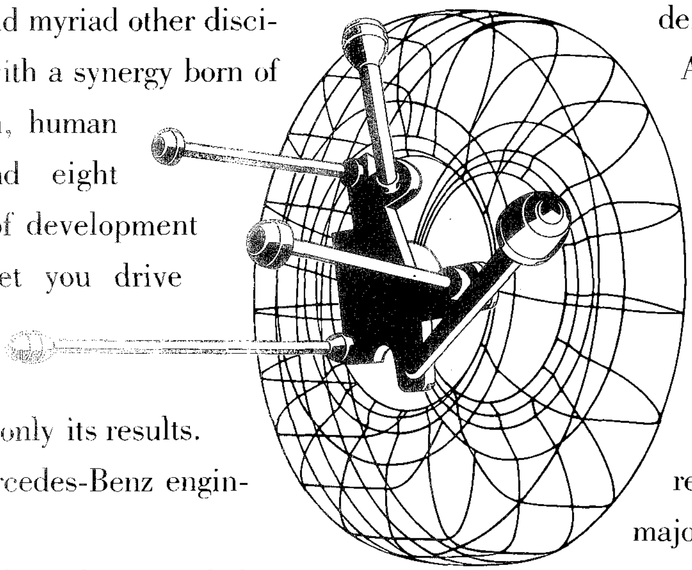

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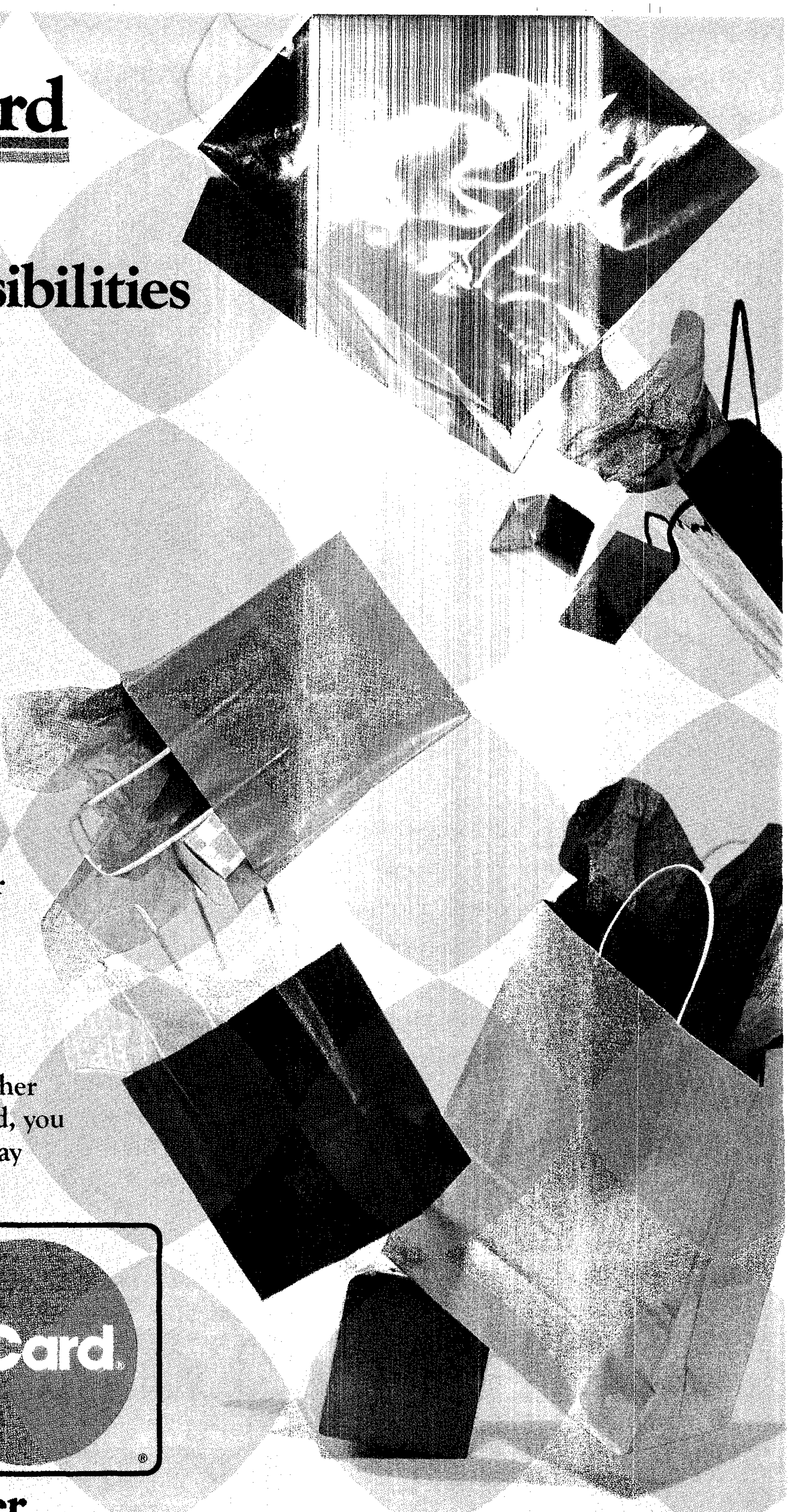

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

Jawlensky (1902-84)—Thirty-four paintings by the elder, *and thirty-five paintings and* pastels by his son. Through May 30. (Hutton, 33 E. 74th St. Open Mondays.)

David Levine—Paintings and caricatures. Through May 6. (Forum, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Roy Lichtenstein—Prints and objects (among them a porcelain tea set) in an exhibit that complements his drawing show at the Modern. Through Saturday, May 2. (Castelli Graphics, 4 E. 77th St.)

Henry Moore (1898-1986)—Bronzes and watercolors. Through May 15. (Weintraub, now at 988 Madison Ave., at 77th St.)

Jim Peters—Elaborate mixed-medium constructions dominated by painted female figures. Through Saturday, May 2. (CDS Gallery, 13 E. 75th St. Open Mondays.)

Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948)—Collages and lithographs. Through May 16. (Carus, 872 Madison Ave., at 71st St.)

Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz—Paintings that juxtapose cloud-filled skies and unspecific industrial architecture. Through Saturday, April 25. (ACA, 21 E. 67th St.)

Ann Sperry—Metal sculptures. Through May 23. (Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St.)

Theodoros Stamos / Bill Barrett—Abstract Expressionist paintings. / Abstract metal sculptures. Through Saturday, May 2. (Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St.)

Leonard Stokes—New figurative paper collages. Through May 23. (Cordier & Ekstrom, 417 E. 75th St.)

Michael Tetherow—New monochromatic abstract paintings, each with a pair of incised circles (his trademark) representing eyes. Through Saturday, May 2. (McCoy, 19 E. 71st St.)

Group Shows—At the **Center for African Art,** 54 E. 68th St.: More than a hundred African objects on loan from the Museum für Völkerkunde, in Munich. Through Aug. 16. (Opens at noon on Sundays.) . . . **Hirschl & Adler Folk,** a new gallery at 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.: The opening exhibit here was organized by the Museum of American Folk Art and includes paintings and furniture, plus the usual quilts, weathervanes, and so forth. Through May 9. . . . **Vanderwoude Tananbaum,** 24 E. 81st St.: Artists of the New York School, including painters Alfred Leslie, Joan Mitchell, and Conrad Marca-Relli, and sculptor Richard Stankiewicz. Through June 26.

GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

Pierre Alechinsky—Two gallery shows are being held to coincide with his retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum. Recent paintings and drawings at Galerie Maeght Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. Through May 9. . . . ¶ Prints at Isselbacher, 41 E. 78th St. Through Saturday, April 25.

James Aponovich—Recent paintings and drawings whose subjects include still-lifes, figures, and a bird's-eye view of the Merrimack River Valley. Through Wednesday, April 29. (Schoelkopf, 50 W. 57th St.)

Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964)—More than a dozen highly stylized sculptures executed in his last ten years, and works on paper. Through May 9. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

John DeAndrea—A new group of his startlingly lifelike polyvinyl female nudes, these posed on pedestals just the way classical sculptures are. Through May 16. (Lamagna, 50 W. 57th St.)

David Deutsch / Donald Sultan—New paintings. / Paintings done in 1980 and recent photographs. Through Saturday, May 2. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Yrjö Edelmann—Trompe-l'oeil paintings of wrinkled fabric on shaped canvases. Through May 26. (Heidenberg, 50 W. 57th St.)

Öyvind Fahlström (1928-76)—Several of his satirical works with movable parts. Through May 16. (Herstand, 24 W. 57th St.)

Sidney Goodman—New figurative drawings, pastels, and watercolors. Through Thursday, April 30. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Red Grooms—The artist has brought his considerable energies to bear on a kind of tribute to Abstract Expressionists, which involves large color drawings of Kline, de Kooning, Rothko, Motherwell, Mitchell, and others, together with two- and three-dimensional depictions of one of their hangouts, the Cedar Tavern. Through Saturday, May 2. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Juan Hamilton / Diane Arbus (1923-71)—Recent sculptures. / Coney Island photographs from the early part of her career. Through Saturday, April 25. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Al Held—A new set of hard-edge paintings. Through Saturday, April 25. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Bill Jensen—Watercolors. Through Saturday, May 2. (Washburn, 41 E. 57th St.)

Robert Jordan / Stephen Tanis—Idyllic panoramic landscapes. / Paintings of still-life objects arranged in front of either Florentine interiors or eighteenth-century Italian paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (French, 41 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Loren MacIver—Recent paintings and earlier pastels. Through Saturday, May 2. (Matisse, 41 E. 57th St.)

Ben Frank Moss—Recent paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Pete Omlor and Nicholas Wilder—Two shows of paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (Protetch, 37 W. 57th St.)

Matt Phillips—Monotypes printed on paper collages, with finishing touches in pastel and charcoal. Through May 14. (Pearl, 38 E. 57th St.)

Carolyn Plochmann—Figure paintings in mixed mediums. Through Saturday, May 2. (Kennedy, 40 W. 57th St.)

Abby Shahn—Geometric abstractions in egg tempera, among other works. Through May 9. (Midtown, 11 E. 57th St.)

Harriet Shorr—Large still-life paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

James Valerio / Frederic Amat—Three large oils of interiors with quirky figures, and the studies drawn for them, by a Photo-Realist. / New wax-and-ink drawings. Through Thursday, April 30. (Frumkin, 50 W. 57th St.)

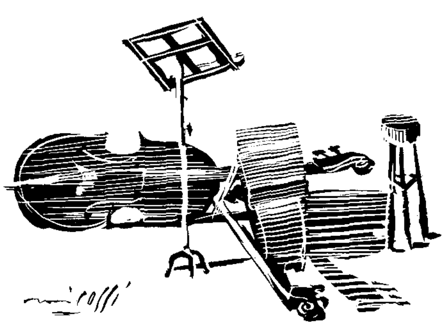
Robin Winters—Paintings and works on paper. Through Saturday, May 2. (Luhring Augustine & Hodes, 41 E. 57th St.)

Group Shows—At the **Borgenicht,** 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.: Canadian landscape paintings by Tom Thomson, Emily Carr, Jack Bush, David Milne, and others. Through Saturday, May 2. . . . **Marian Goodman,** 24 W. 57th St.: Works by John Baldessari, Dan Graham, Lawrence Weiner, Rebecca Horn, and others. Through May 9. (Open Mondays.) . . . **Grand Central Art Galleries,** 24 W. 57th St.: Works by American women painters and sculptors active before 1945, among them Malvina Hoffman and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. Through May 16. (Open Mondays.)

GALLERIES—SoHo

Linda Besemer—Thickly painted abstract oils and charcoal drawings. Through May 16. (Stephen Rosenberg, 115 Wooster St. Opens at noon.)

Hans Breder—Abstract pastel drawings. Through Wednesday, April 29. (Schreiber-Cutler, 171 Spring St.)



Daniel Buren / Sol LeWitt—An installation by a French conceptualist. / Sculptures based on pyramids. Through Saturday, April 25. (Weber, 142 Greene St.)

Michael Chelminski—Paintings, among them a canvas that concentrates on the currents of the Damariscotta River and the clouds above. Through Wednesday, April 29. (Blue Mountain, 121 Wooster St. Opens daily, except Mondays, at noon.)

Robert Colescott—New paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (Semaphore, 137 Greene St.)

Chuck Connelly—Expressionist landscapes. Through Thursday, April 30. (Nosei, 100 Prince St.)

William N. Copley—New mixed-medium paintings with the old irreverence—toward art, Victoriana, authority. Through Saturday, May 2. (Kind, 136 Greene St.)

Dorothy Dehner / Geer Morton—Works on paper from her "Bolton Landing" series. / Oil paintings. Through May 23. (Twining, 568 Broadway. Opens at noon.)

Loretta Dunkelman—Impasto paintings. Through May 9. (A.I.R., 63 Crosby St.)

Heidi Endemann—A series of paintings of black dogs so vicious-looking they are horror-story stereotypes. Through Wednesday, April 29. (Milliken, 98 Prince St.)

Gathie Falk—A large series of inventive still-life paintings in which plump chairs—all in shades of red—provide a kind of arena for clothes, gardens, and fish. Through Saturday, May 2. (49th Parallel, 420 West Broadway.)

Joel Fisher—Two shows. Bronzes. Through Saturday, May 2. (Brown, 100 Greene St.) . . . ¶ Bronzes and preparatory drawings. Through May 9. (Cadot, 470 Broome St.)

Aharon Gluska—Small abstractions. Through Saturday, May 2. (Stark, 568 Broadway. Opens at noon.)

Ti Shan Hsu—A two-gallery show. Painted wall reliefs. Through May 9. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.) . . . ¶ A sculpture installation. Through May 10. (Hearn, 735 E. 9th St., just west of Avenue D. Opens at 1 Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Noah Jemison—Semi-abstract encaustic paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (Steinbaum, 132 Greene St.)

Carla Rae Johnson / Rhea Sanders—Wood sculptures glorifying the equipment that can be found in a woodworker's studio. / Still-lifes and landscapes in egg tempera and other mediums. Through Saturday, May 2. (SoHo 20, at 469 Broome St. Opens daily, except Mondays, at noon.)

Josef Levi / Peter Saari—New paintings by an artist who likes to copy and pair off portraits by his predecessors—a Titian woman looking demurely in the direction of a Jawlensky painted lady, for instance. / Roman and Pompeian walls brought to life in casein-and-plaster on board. Through Saturday, April 25. (O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway.)

Carlo Maria Mariana—Neoclassical paintings: figures and portraits of contemporary artists. Through Thursday, April 30. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

Gerhard Merz—An installation of five small bronze skulls and five severe-looking stained-limba (a kind of mahogany) memorial tablets inscribed with the names of cities associated with the Italian Futurists. Through Saturday, April 25. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Matt Mullican—A commission made for the Dallas Museum of Art consisting of fifty-two oil-stick rubbings on canvas which contain the artist's familiar shorthand emblems for life-or-death issues. Through May 16. (Klein, 611 Broadway.)

Sabina Ott—Multipanel paintings of incongruous subjects—a wheelbarrow hung above a dark seascape, for instance. Through Saturday, April 25. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

Omar Rayo—Paintings from the past twenty years by a Colombian Op artist. Through May 3. (Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, 584 Broadway. Open Sundays.)

David Salle—Watercolors from the past five years, mainly views of nude spread legs fore

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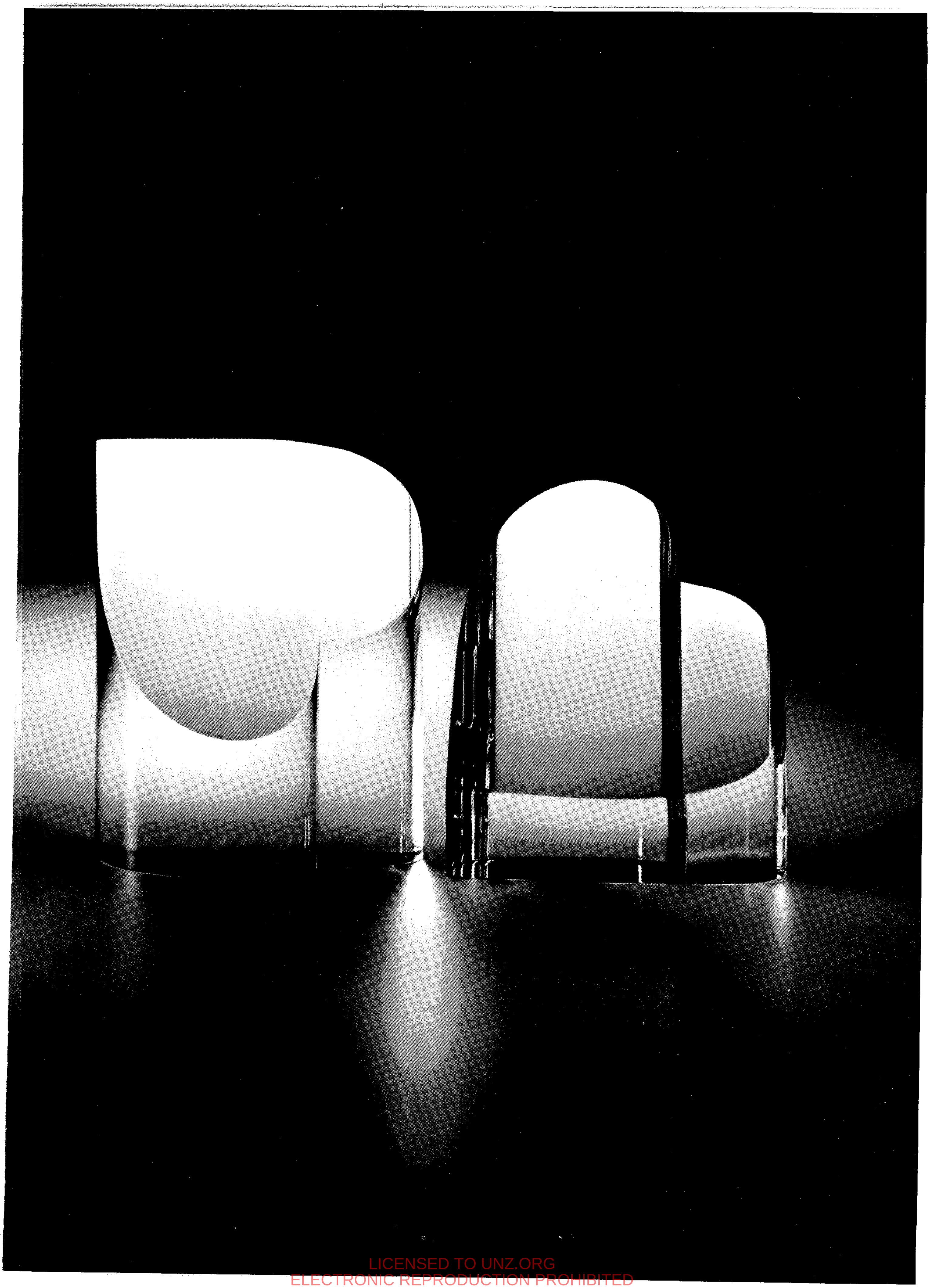

and aft, male and female. Through Saturday, April 25. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Joseph Santore—Paintings of abstractions that subsume some recognizable objects—a staircase, figures, fruit, a bunch of carrots. Through May 9. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

Elfi Schuselka—An installation and new paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (Condeso-Lawler, 76 Greene St.)

David Sipress—Constructions made with scraps of wood, primarily chair parts, still showing patches of old paint. Through Thursday, April 30. (Munroe, 415 West Broadway.)

Peter Solow—Paintings and drawings of landscapes with figures. Through May 16. (Green, 152 Wooster St.)

Andrew Spence—Abstract paintings. Through Saturday, May 2. (Toll, 146 Greene St.)

The Starn Twins—Photographic works by these twenty-five-year-old identical-twin brothers from Boston, who start their joint projects with a single negative—in this show, an image of two horses' heads in profile has been reproduced in about eighty different ways—and sometimes go on to create three-dimensional works, such as "Christ (Stretched)" in the Whitney Biennial. Through May 23. (Stux, 155 Spring St.)

Richard Tobias / Georg Baselitz—Geometric abstractions in oil. / Works on paper from the sixties. Through May 13. (Alexander, 59 Wooster St.)

Michael Zwack—Paintings, works on paper, and sculptures. Through Wednesday, April 29. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.)

P.U.L.S.E.—The name of a show of very active kinetic machine sculptures that make sounds, create light, or present moving images. The artists, who use such technologies as fibre optics, neon, and computers, seem to come from the same family tree, starting with the granddaddy Marcel Duchamp, and coming on down to Jean Tinguely, James L. Seawright, Alice Aycock, Kristin Jones, and Andrew Ginzel. Through May 23. (420 West Broadway, ground floor.)

Drawings from France 1400-1900—A show on loan from Stockholm's Nationalmuseum. Through July 22. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

OTHER GALLERIES

Paul Benney—Semi-abstract paintings on wood, one with a heavy wire cage built out from the painted surface. Through May 3. (P.P.O.W, 337 E. 8th St., near Avenue C. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Paul Bowen—Rough-looking wood reliefs. Through May 10. (Shainman, 500 E. 11th St., near Avenue A. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Annette Lemieux—A two-gallery exhibit of photographs, paintings, objects, and texts in various combinations by a conceptualist. (Cash-Newhouse, 170 Avenue B, near 11th St. Opens at 1 Wednesdays through Sundays. Through May 3. . . . ¶ Baer, 270 Lafayette St. Through Saturday, April 25.)

Bonnie Lucas—Assemblages and watercolors. Through Sunday, April 26. (Avenue B Gallery, 167 Avenue B, at 11th St. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Tom Nussbaum—Small tin constructions painted in acrylic with solid colors. Through May 3. (*Fiction-Nonfiction*, 155 Avenue B, at 10th St. Opens at 1 Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Robin Rose—Recent abstract paintings. Through Sunday, April 26. (M-13, at 413 E. 9th St. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

David Row—Paintings using the double helix and other geometric forms on split canvases and diptychs. Through May 9. (Good, 39 Great Jones St.)

Frank Stella—Paintings from 1958. Through May 30. (Gagosian, 521 W. 23rd St., near Eleventh Ave.)

Taro Suzuki—Sculptural experiments in optical illusion. Through Saturday, May 2. (Newburg, 44 White St.)

Guerrilla Girls Review the Whitney—The anonymous Guerrilla Girls (they asked The Clocktower staff to vacate the premises while they mounted their work) keep track of the status of women artists. Huge graphics analyze the Whitney Biennial from that point of view, starting with the 1973 show. Through May 17. (The Clocktower, 108 Leonard St. Opens at noon Thursdays through Sundays.)

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26	27	28	29	30	1	2

PHOTOGRAPHY

Zeke Berman—Black-and-white photographs of still-life and interior constructions made by the artist, who was trained as a sculptor. Through May 9. (Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St.)

Sarah Charlesworth—Laminated Cibachrome prints with lacquer frames. Through May 10. (*International with Monument*, 111 E. 7th St. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Van Deren Coke—Recent photographs of Mexico. Through May 16. (Neikrug, 224 E. 68th St. Opens at 1 Wednesdays through Saturdays.)

Timothy Greenfield-Sanders—Photographs of Leo Castelli, Hilton Kramer, Brice Marden, and others modelling clothes by the designer Rei Kawakubo; the photographs were originally part of an ad campaign. Through May 21. (Pfeiffer, 568 Broadway.)

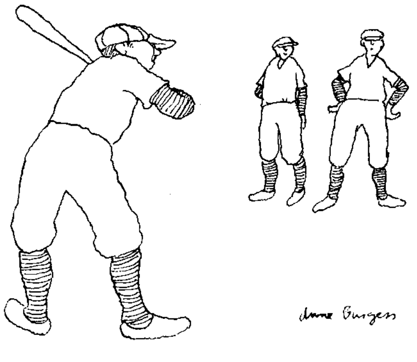
Jan Groover—A retrospective show of eighty photographs is at the Museum of Modern Art. See below, under "Museums," for dates and times.

Lisette Model (1906-83)—Vacationers on the Riviera, windows of New York stores, and other subjects typical of this photographer. Through Saturday, April 25. (Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway.)

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Saturday, April 25, is the opening day of new galleries built to hold the Japanese art in the museum's collection. The wide-ranging display will include a twelfth-century Dainichi Buddha, a *shoin*-style room with sliding-screen walls, and a sculpture by Isamu Noguchi. . . . ¶ A loan show of forty-eight French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings belonging to the Courtauld Institute of Art, in London. Renoir's "La Loge" and Gauguin's "Te Rerioa" are among them. Through June 21. . . . ¶ A show of paintings by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists from the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy—Correggio, Parmigianino, the Carracci brothers. More than half of the two hundred works are on loan from Italian collections and are seen here for the first time. (There is also an exhibit of Emilian drawings and prints of the period from the museum's collections.) Through May 24. . . . ¶ "Dance" is the title of the Costume Institute's show of men's and women's evening dress and accessories. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—A retrospective show of works by Paul Klee. Through May 5. . . . ¶ A survey of Roy Lichtenstein's drawings. Through June 2. (A complementary show is at Castelli Graphics, 4 E. 77th St.) . . . **Photography:** Prints by Jan Groover. Through June 2. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)



Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—An exhibit of paintings, drawings, and prints by the Belgian artist Pierre Alechinsky which chronicles his use of sketches in the borders of his works. Mr. Alechinsky has taken this border motif one step further by painting a rising sun around the museum's elevator entrances. (Complementary shows are at the Galerie Maeght Lelong, 20 W. 57th St., and, ending Saturday, April 25, at the Isselbacher Gallery, 41 E. 78th St.) . . . ¶ About sixty works that Peggy Guggenheim either showed at her gallery Art of This Century (open from 1942 to 1947) or donated to American museums, in an effort to promote the avant-garde of her time. There are works by Jackson Pollock, David Hare, and Matta that haven't been seen here since the forties. Both shows through May 3. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 11 to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—The Whitney Biennial. Through June 28. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—A display of about two hundred works of ancient art donated to the museum by Ernest Erickson, a collector of textiles, ceramics, and metalwork from North and South America and Asia. Through May 18. . . . ¶ Sculptures, drawings, and monotypes by Mary Frank. Through June 7. . . . ¶ Sculptures, paintings, and drawings by Peter Gourfain. Through May 11. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—The ABCs of braiding illustrated with traditional fibre, clay, and metal articles from all over the world and with contemporary works by thirty-five artisans. . . . ¶ Glass objects from nine countries. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 10 to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

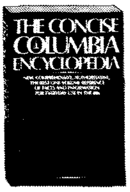
Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—A loan show of Buddhist illuminated manuscripts whose decorative motifs and materials are indigenous to the ten Asian countries where the works originated. Through June 7. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—An exhibition of Chinese folk art that once decorated the homes of rural Han peasants and had the additional function of protecting their well-being. Bad luck could be warned off with, for example, a red papercut of a figure that is blowing a horn, banging a drum, and, for good measure, balancing a rooster on its head. Papercuts, embroidered garments, fabrics, and woodblocks. Through May 31. (Open daily. Hours: Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 2 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—A show devoted to Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), the influential Chicago-school architect and the mentor of Frank Lloyd Wright. Drawings, photographs, models, and architectural details from some of his projects. Through June 28. . . . ¶ The accomplishments of a contemporaneous Spanish architect, Antoni Gaudí, seen in the context of the work of his peers in Barcelona, are the focus of an exhibit that includes architectural drawings, furniture, tiles, metalwork, and glass objects. Through June 9. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—An exhibition of illustrations by Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, an eighteenth-century French artist and student of Boucher. The pen-and-ink and wash drawings were done for Jean Chappe d'Auteroche's "Voyage en Sibérie" (also on view), a book that, dwelling as it does on the coarser aspects of Russian life, did not exactly delight Catherine the Great (she wrote a rebuttal). Through June 14. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—Italian Re-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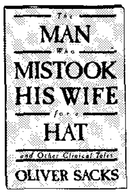
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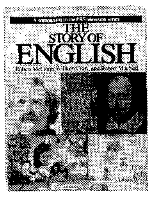
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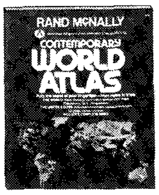
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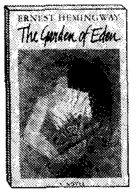
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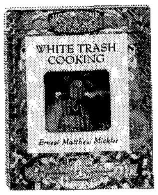
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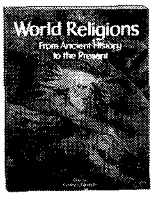
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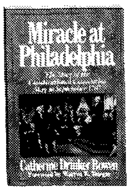
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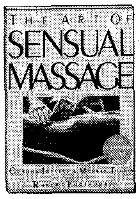
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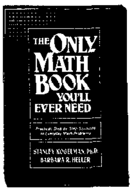
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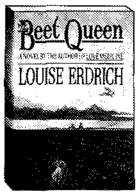
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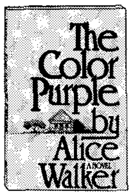
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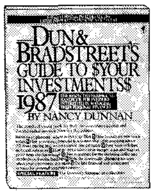
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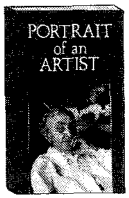
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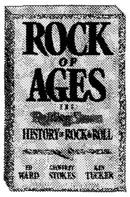
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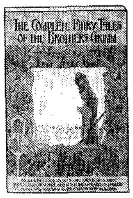
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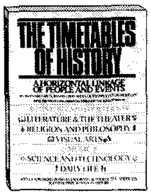
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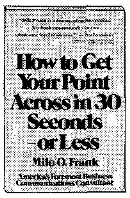
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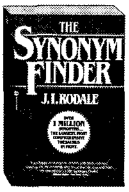
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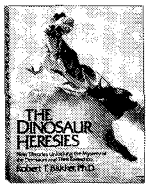
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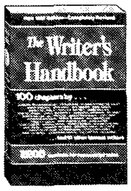
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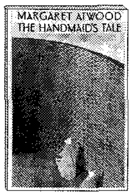
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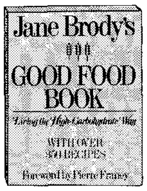
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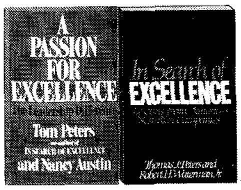
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New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—An exhibit that commemorates the bicentennial of the U. S. Constitution with oil portraits, prints, manuscripts, letters, and other memorabilia from the fifteen-year period during which the Founding Fathers created the document. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 6.)

ART AFTER DARK

(Performance, music, dance, video, film, and combinations thereof.)

The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793—Music programs (starting at 9)—Thursday, April 23: Virgilio Martí and Arthur Russell; Friday, April 24: Butch Morris and trio and The Deed; Saturday, April 25: Michel Waisvisz; Thursday, April 30: Anthony Coleman and Bill Frisell; Friday, May 1: George Lewis; Saturday, May 2: Marco Rizo and Third Rail.

P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288—Jane Comfort (dance), Friday through Sunday, April 24-26, at 9.

MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 427-4410. Other box-office numbers are included in the listings.)

OPERA

Juilliard American Opera Center—A double bill of short operas by Gian Carlo Menotti: The New York première of "Tamu-Tamu," in English and Indonesian; and the opera buffa "Amelia al Ballo." Mark Stringer is conducting the Juilliard Symphony; staging by Mr. Menotti. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Friday, April 24, at 8; Sunday, April 26, at 3; and Tuesday, April 28, at 8. For information about tickets, call 874-7515.)

Amato Opera Company—The American première of Brazilian composer Antônio Carlos Gomes's 1874 Italian opera "Salvator Rosa." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Saturdays and Friday, April 24, at 7:30, and Sundays at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Andrew Davis conducting—Thursday, April 23, at 8; Friday, April 24, at 2; and Saturday, April 25, at 8: An Arnold Bax–Michael Tippett–Beethoven program, with Emanuel Ax, piano. . . . ¶ Thursday, April 30, at 8, and Friday, May 1, at 2: A Haydn-Holst program, with the New York Choral Artists. . . . ¶ Saturday, May 2, at 8: A program of works by Peter Schickele and his alter ego, P.D.Q. Bach, benefitting the Philharmonic's Pension Fund. Professor Schickele will assist as conductor, instrumental soloist, and baroque factotum.

Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig—Kurt Masur conducting. (Carnegie Hall. Thursday, April 23, at 8: With Karl Mehlig, timpani. . . . ¶ Friday, April 24, at 8: With Horacio Gutiérrez, piano.)

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra—Robert Shaw conducting works by Brahms, Harbison, and Lutoslawski, with Peter Serkin, piano. (Carnegie Hall. Sunday, April 26, at 8.)

Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra—Nicholas McGegan conducting. (Alice Tully Hall. Sunday, April 26, at 8.)

Boston Symphony—At Carnegie Hall, Seiji Ozawa conducting, with Krystian Zimerman, soloist—Tuesday, April 28, at 8: Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 and works by R. Murray Schaeffer and Ravel. . . . ¶ Wednesday and Thursday, April 29-30, at 8: Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Bruckner's Symphony No. 2.

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St. Louis Symphony—At Carnegie Hall, Leonard Slatkin conducting—Friday, May 1, at 8: A Haydn-Barber-Shostakovich program, with John Browning, piano. . . . ¶ Saturday, May 2, at 8: The New York première of a work by Joan Tower; Sibelius's Symphony No. 5; and Henryk Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 2, with Elmar Oliveira, soloist.

Manhattan Symphony Orchestra—Milton Katims conducting. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Friday, April 24, at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Orpheus—With Alicia de Larrocha, piano. (Carnegie Hall. Monday, April 27, at 8.)

Philharmonia Virtuosi—Richard Kapp conducting an all-Ravel program, with Cameron Grant, piano. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Tuesday, April 28, at 8.)

Brooklyn Philharmonic—Lukas Foss conducting the last of the "Meet the Moderns" programs, this one devoted to New York premières of works by an array of international composers. With Margaret Leng Tan, piano. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. Thursday, April 30, at 8. . . . ¶ Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Friday, May 1, at 8.) For information about tickets, call 1-718 636-4120.

New York Chamber Symphony of the 92nd Street Y—Gerard Schwarz conducting a program that includes a new work by Barbara Kolb. With Ralph Kirshbaum, cello. (Saturday, May 2, at 8, and Sunday, May 3, at 3.)

Musica Sacra—Richard Westenburg directing the chorus and orchestra in the New York première of a work by Dave Brubeck (with Mr. Brubeck's quartet and David Arnold, baritone), Daniel Pinkham's "Easter Cantata," and a new work by McNeil Robinson. (Avery Fisher Hall. Friday, April 24, at 7:30.)

Mannes Chorus—Amy Kaiser directing. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Friday, April 24, at 8. No tickets necessary.)

RECITALS

Jorge Bolet—Piano. (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium. Thursday, April 23, at 8.)

Jan DeGaetani—Mezzo-soprano, with Gilbert Kalish, piano. (92nd Street Y. Thursday, April 23, at 8.)

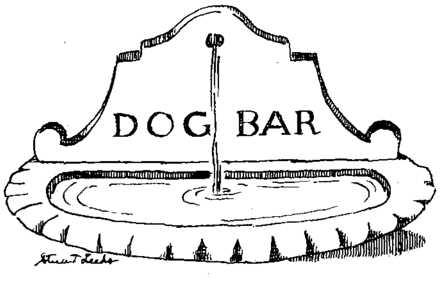
Ravi Shankar—Sitar. (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium. Friday, April 24, at 8.)

Composers Concordance—A program of eight works, by as many authors. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Friday, April 24, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—With *Arleen Augér, soprano; Katherine Ciesinski,* mezzo-soprano; John Aler, tenor; Ben Holt, baritone; and Carla Bley, playing the piano for her new composition. (Alice Tully Hall, Friday, April 24, at 8, and Sunday, April 26, at 5.)

Misha Dichter—Piano. (92nd Street Y. Saturday, April 25, at 8.)

Galimir String Quartet—In a Beethoven-Mendelssohn-Dvořák program. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Saturday, April 25, at 8. No tickets necessary.)



Mendelssohn String Quartet—With Bonnie Hampton, cello. (Merkin Concert Hall. Saturday, April 25, at 8.)

Harpsichord Unlimited—Presenting the Trio Bell-Arte, playing the second of four programs. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Saturday, April 25, at 8. . . . ¶ O. K. Harris Gallery, 383 West Broadway. Monday, April 27, at 8.) For information about tickets, call 666-9427.

Boston Musica Viva—Richard Pittman conducting, with Jane Manning, soprano, and Randall Hodgkinson, piano. (Weill Recital Hall. Sunday, April 26, at 2.)

Bella Davidovich—Piano. (Carnegie Hall. Sunday, April 26, at 3.)

Claudio Arrau—Piano. (Avery Fisher Hall. Sunday, April 26, at 3.)

Si-Yo Music Society—Chamber works by Mozart, Max Bruch, and Anton Arensky. (Schimmel Center for the Arts, Pace University, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 488-1715. Sunday, April 26, at 3.)

Patricia Neely, Joyce Lindorff, and Ruth Cunningham—Viola da gamba, harpsichord, and baroque flute/soprano. (St. Ignatius' Episcopal Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. Sunday, April 26, at 4. Admission by contribution.)

Gayle Schmidt—Piano. (Alice Tully Hall. Monday, April 27, at 8.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—The last in a series of chamber-music concerts. (Merkin Concert Hall. Monday, April 27, at 8.)

Aulos Ensemble—With Julianne Baird, soprano. (Rutgers Church, 236 W. 73rd St. Monday, April 27, at 8. For information about tickets, call 567-2069.)

Manhattan String Quartet—With Harold Lewin, piano, and Paul Sperry, tenor, in a program of Finnish music. (St. Stephen's Church, 122 W. 69th St. Monday, April 27, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

David Jolley—Horn. (Merkin Concert Hall. Tuesday, April 28, at 2.)

David Tanenbaum—Guitar. (92nd Street Y. Tuesday, April 28, at 8.)

Group for Contemporary Music—With Susan Jolles, harp, and Ronald Borror, trombone. (Merkin Concert Hall. Tuesday, April 28, at 8.)

Music from Arcady—Nancy Allen, harp; William Blossom, double bass; Eugene Drucker, violin; Masanobu Ikemiya, piano and harpsichord, and others. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015. Tuesday, April 28, at 8.)

Peabody Conservatory Percussion Ensemble—Jonathan Haas conducting, with David Friedman, vibraphone, and Joe Passaro, conga. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Tuesday, April 28, at 8.)

Marlow Fisher and Friends—Joining the violinist will be pianists Erika Nickenz and Bright Sheng. (Weill Recital Hall. Tuesday, April 28, at 8.)

Juilliard Percussion Ensemble and Juilliard Wind Ensemble—A joint program, with Roland Kohloff *conducting the former, and* Mark Gould conducting the latter. (Alice Tully Hall. Tuesday, April 28, at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—With Lynn Harrell, cello, and Kim Kashkashian, viola. (Alice Tully Hall. Wednesday, April 29, at 8.)

Andrew Violette—Piano, performing his own works. With the Hampshire String Quartet; Bruce Wang, cello; and vocal soloists. (Weill Recital Hall. Wednesday, April 29, at 8.)

New York Philomusica—With David Krakauer, clarinet, and Meg Bachman Vas, piano. (Merkin Concert Hall. Wednesday, April 29, at 8.)

Edward Aldwell—Piano, in an all-Bach program. (Merkin Concert Hall. Thursday, April 30, at 8.)

Jorma Hynninen—Baritone, in Schubert's song cycle "Die Winterreise." (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium. Thursday, April 30, at 8.)

Norma French—Soprano, singing songs by Grieg. (Alice Tully Hall. Thursday, April 30, at 8.)

Joelle Leandre and Ned Rothenberg—Double bass and saxophone/clarinet, each performing their own compositions. Miss Leandre's program includes other works, and employs tape, voice, and text. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. Thursday, April 30, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Musicians' Accord—In a program that features Christine Schadeberg, soprano, in Schoenberg's "Cabaret Songs" and "Pierrot Lunaire," in the English translation by Andrew Porter. (Weill Recital Hall. Thursday, April 30, at 8.)

Spoleto Festival Chamber Music at BAM—The last in a series of concerts will include the New York première of Michael Alec Rose's solo-violin sonata, performed by Joseph Anton Swensen. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Saturday, May 2, at 8.)

MISCELLANY

La Monte Young—Presenting his improvisational work "The Well-Tuned Piano" in five-hour performances, during which the audience is free to come and go. (Dia Art Foundation, 155 Mercer St. Taped shows on Wednesdays at 6, and live programs Sundays, also at 6. Through May 13. For information about tickets, call 925-8270.)

Downtown Chamber and Opera Players—In a program of assorted contemporary works, some involving dance, theatre, or film and all with an accent on music as satire. Guest artists include composer Marshall Coid, violin, and Eric Benson, narrator. (Midtown Y, 344 E. 14th St. Saturday, April 25, at 8, also with the Alliance for American Song; and Sunday, April 26, at 8. For information about tickets, call 477-1594.)

Benefit Concerts—Meredith Monk performing her "Songs from the Hill" and a work by Nurit Tilles for two voices, two pianos, and percussion; with Miss Tilles. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. Saturday, April 25, at 8. For information about tickets, call 242-4770.) . . . ¶ Martha Bernard, soprano, and Katherine Enders, mezzo-soprano. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. 929-2390. Sunday, April 26, at 4.) . . . ¶ Murray Perahia conducting and acting as piano soloist for the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium. Wednesday, April 29, at 8.)

SPORTS

(The ticket-information number for Shea Stadium is 1-718 507-8499, and for Yankee Stadium 293-6000.)

Baseball—**yankees** at Yankee Stadium: Vs. Detroit, Wednesday, April 22, at 7:30. . . . **mets** at Shea Stadium: Vs. St. Louis, Friday, April 24, at 7:35, and Saturday and Sunday, April 25-26, at 1:35. . . . ¶ Houston, Monday through Wednesday, April 27-29, at 7:35. . . . ¶ Montreal, Thursday and Friday, April 30-May 1, at 7:35, and Saturday, May 2, at 2:20.

Racing—At **aqueduct:** Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1; through Monday, May 4. . . . **churchill downs,** Louisville, Ky.: The Kentucky Derby, Saturday, May 2.

Running—The Trevira Ten-Mile Twosome will start at ten-thirty on Saturday, April 25, in Central Park near the Tavern on the Green and finish back at the same place.

ET ALIA

Poetry and Prose Readings—Robert Hass and Jorie Graham reading from their own poetry. (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. Monday, April 27, at 8. For tickets, call 645-5848.) . . . ¶ Jayne Anne Phillips reading from her own short stories. (Endicott Booksellers, 450 Columbus Ave., at 81st St. Tuesday, April 28, at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nadine Gordimer reading from her own prose and Dennis Brutus reading from his own poetry; afterward they will join a panel discussion called "The South African Writer: At Home and in Exile." (Poets House, located in the High School for Humanities, 351 W. 18th St. Wednesday, April 29, at 7:30; tickets at the door on the night of the reading. . . . The following night at 7:30, Mr. Brutus and a group of South African poets not well known here will read from their own works.) . . . ¶ Joan Larkin reading from her own poetry and Ellen Currie reading from her own fiction. (West Side Y, 5 W. 63rd St. 787-6557. Wednesday, April 29, at 8.)

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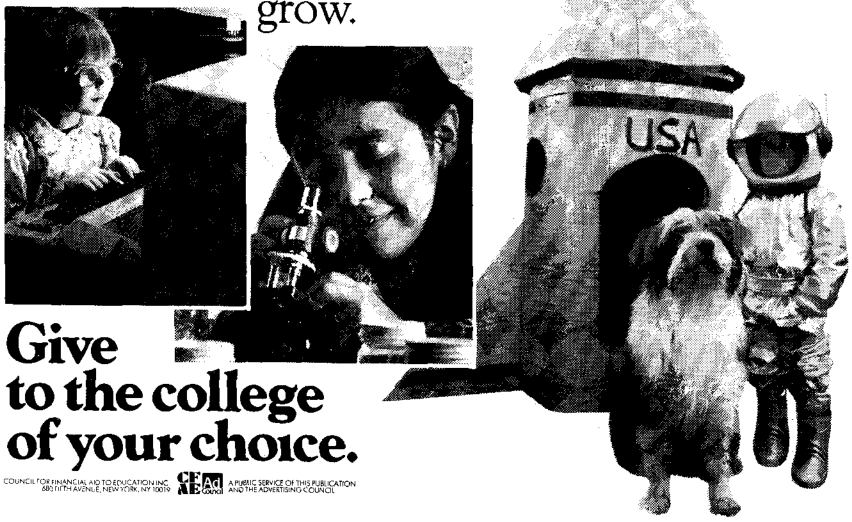

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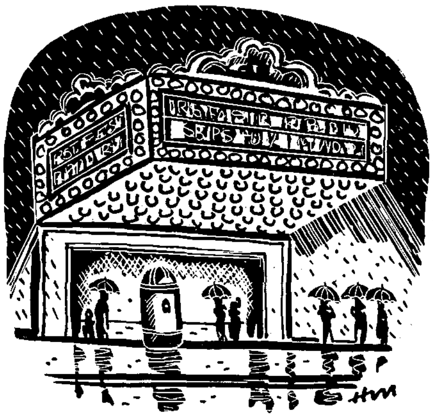

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION STARTING ON PAGE 23.

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171; theatre opens in the late afternoon and is closed Mondays.)
Through April 23: At 6, "An Autumn Afternoon" (1962; directed by Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese); at 8, "The Spider's Stratagem" (1970; Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian); and, at 10, "Peppermint Soda" (1979; Diane Kurys; in French).
From April 24: A program of over thirty film, video, and made-for-TV documentaries.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Angel Heart" (†).
Theatre 2: "Lethal Weapon" (†).
Theatre 3: Through April 23: "Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol" (Jim Drake), with Steve Guttenberg. From April 24: "Extreme Prejudice" (Walter Hill), with Nick Nolte and Powers Boothe.

New Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Blind Date" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Raising Arizona" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "The Secret of My Success" (Herbert Ross), with Michael J. Fox and Helen Slater.
Theatre 2: Through April 23: "Radio Days" (†). From April 24: "My Demon Lover" (Charles Loventhal), with Scott Valentine.
Theatre 3: "Platoon" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Project X" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Matthew Broderick.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
(Matinées only) "The Aristocats" (1970), a full-length Walt Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "Blue Velvet" (†).

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Through April 23: "Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol" (Jim Drake), with Steve Guttenberg.
From April 24: "Extreme Prejudice" (Walter Hill), with Nick Nolte and Powers Boothe.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Project X" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Matthew Broderick.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
Through April 30: "Children of a Lesser God" (Randa Haines), with William Hurt and Marlee Matlin.
From May 1: "The Allnighter" (Tamar Simon Hoffs), with Susanna Hoffs and Joan Cusack.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through April 23: "Outrageous Fortune" (†). From April 24: "The Housekeeper" (Ousama Rawi), with Rita Tushingham.
Theatre 2: Through April 23: "Three for the Road" (B. W. L. Norton), with Charlie Sheen, Alan Ruck, and Kerri Green. From April 24: "Forever, Lulu" (Amos Kollek), with Hanna Schygulla and Deborah Harry.

D. W. Griffith, 235 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Lethal Weapon" (†).

Cinema I and II, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022/0774)
Theatre 1: "Gothic" (Ken Russell).
Theatre 2: "Tin Men" (†).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "The Secret of My Success" (Herbert Ross), with Michael J. Fox and Helen Slater.
Theatre 2: "Blind Date" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Raising Arizona" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Radio Days" (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 23: "Platoon" (†). From April 24: "My Demon Lover" (Charles Loventhal), with Scott Valentine.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"A Room with a View" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Making Mr. Right" (Susan Seidelman), with John Malkovich and Ann Magnuson.

U.A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol" (Jim Drake), with Steve Guttenberg.

R.K.O. 86th St. Twin, Lexington at 86th. (289-8900)
Theatre 1: "Lethal Weapon" (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 23: "Burglar" (Hugh Wilson), with Whoopi Goldberg. From April 24: "Extreme Prejudice" (Walter Hill), with Nick Nolte and Powers Boothe.

Loews Orpheum I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)
Theatre 1: "Angel Heart" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Secret of My Success" (Herbert Ross), with Michael J. Fox and Helen Slater.

86th St. East, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
"Project X" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Matthew Broderick.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum I and 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Theatre 1: Through April 28: "Karen Blixen" (1953; directed by Nic. Lichtenberg; in Dutch), a short interview with Blixen; "Samuel Beckett: Silence to Silence" (1984; Sean O Mordha), a documentary; and "William Carlos Williams" (1986; Richard P. Rogers), a documentary. From April 29: "The Brothers Quay" (†).
Theatre 2: See listings under "Revival Houses."

Bleecker St. Cinema I and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)
Theatre 1: "The Festival of Claymation," a full-length film of animated short features by Will Vinton.
Theatre 2: "Working Girls" (Lizzie Borden).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Raising Arizona" (†).
Theatre 2: "Tin Men" (†).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Through April 23: "The Hanoi Hilton" (Lionel Chetwynd), with Michael Moriarty.
From April 24: "A Nightmare on Elm Street, Part 3: Dream Warriors" (Chuck Russell).

R.K.O. Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: Through April 23: "Crocodile Dundee" (Peter Faiman), with Paul Hogan. From April 24: "Kangaroo" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Assault" (Fons Rademakers; in Dutch).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: Through April 23: "Wild Thing" (†). From April 24: To be announced.
Theatre 2: "Hollywood Shuffle" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 3: "A Room with a View" (†).
Theatre 4: "Children of a Lesser God" (Randa Haines), with William Hurt and Marlee Matlin.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Making Mr. Right" (Susan Seidelman), with John Malkovich and Ann Magnuson.
Theatre 2: "Project X" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Matthew Broderick.
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) "The Aristocats" (1970), a full-length Walt Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "Outrageous Fortune" (†).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
Through April 30: "The Aristocats" (1970), a full-length Walt Disney animated film.
From May 1: "Memed, My Hawk" (Peter Ustinov), with Ustinov and Herbert Lom.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Working Girls" (Lizzie Borden).

New Carnegie, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
"Heaven" (Diane Keaton).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)
Through April 23: "Kangaroo" (†).
From April 24: "L'Année des Meduses" (Christopher Frank; in French).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
Through April 30: "Man Facing Southeast" (Eliseo Subiela; an Argentine film, in Spanish).
From May 1: "Kangaroo" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Making Mr. Right" (Susan Seidelman), with John Malkovich and Ann Magnuson.

Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Prick Up Your Ears" (Stephen Frears).
Theatre 2: Through April 30: "Sorekara" (†). From May 1: "My Life as a Dog" (Lasse Halström; in Swedish).
Theatre 3: Through April 30: "Prick Up Your Ears." From May 1: "Rosa Luxemburg" (Margarethe von Trotta; in Polish and German).

Cinema Studio I and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "Law of Desire" (†).
Theatre 2: "Swimming to Cambodia" (†).

Embassy 72nd St. I and 2, B'way at 72nd. (724-6745)
Theatre 1: "Raising Arizona" (†).
Theatre 2: "Padre Nuestro" (Francisco Regueiro; in Spanish), with Fernando Rey and Francisco Rabal.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Tin Men" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Secret of My Success" (Herbert Ross), with Michael J. Fox and Helen Slater.
Theatre 3: "Project X" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Matthew Broderick.
Theatre 4: "Lethal Weapon" (†).
Theatre 5: Through April 23: "Platoon" (†). From April 24: "Extreme Prejudice" (Walter Hill), with Nick Nolte and Powers Boothe.
Theatre 6: "Blind Date" (†).

Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Hollywood Shuffle" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 2: Through April 30: "The Festival of Claymation," a full-length film of animated short features by Will Vinton. From May 1: "The Element of Crime" (Lars von Trier).

Olympia Quad, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: Through April 26: "The Secret of My Success" (Herbert Ross), with Michael J. Fox and Helen Slater. From April 27: Theatre closed.
Theatre 2: Through April 26: "Children of a Lesser God" (Randa Haines), with William Hurt and Marlee Matlin. From April 27: Theatre closed.
Theatre 3: Through April 26: "Angel Heart" (†). From April 27: Theatre closed.
Theatre 4: Through April 26: (Matinées only)

CUSTOMER INFORMATION FROM GENERAL MOTORS

HOW GM DEVELOPED A NEW PRODUCTION METHOD

TECHNOLOGY, PEOPLE, AND BETTER-BUILT CARS

In the early 1980s, General Motors set out to bring about an industrial renaissance in America. The most difficult part was to acknowledge that we could no longer build cars in the traditional manner.

We had to go to the heart of America's industrial problem. We had to develop and implement a new method of production. And we had to pay for it.

To gain the competitive edge, and keep it, we had to invest tens of billions of dollars. Merely to match the quality of others would not be enough. We had to leapfrog our competition. It would be hard, and it would be costly.

Old ways had to change. Adam Smith had written about the division of labor in the 18th century. His thinking drove the industrial revolution of the 19th. Mass production gained new efficiency early in this century when Henry Ford conceived the assembly line. And when Frederick Taylor's time-and-motion studies were added, the assembly line became very efficient—but very rigid.

The great flaw in the assembly line concept is that—followed to its extreme—it tends to exclude the creative and managerial skills of the people who work on the line. With the advent of computers, robotics, and other new technologies, the problems of the old method increased enormously. But at the same time, whole new areas of opportunity opened.

We believe that new technology must be integrated with new social systems in a human partnership. A partnership that gives people authority over machines and responsibility for their work. Once people are put in charge of machines, their creativity is unleashed.

That requires new kinds of plants and new kinds of management. It requires people who know about technology and can work with machines and with each other.

As we began to implement the new method, we had to guard against too much automation and too little training. So we redesigned some of our processes and broadened our training efforts. In the process, we became the largest private educational institution in the world.

Finally, the new production method requires skills in systems design and electronics that were not available in the automobile industry. So we acquired EDS and Hughes Aircraft to get those skills. Each plant has to be a single system, every part of which is responsive to other parts, and all plants part of the overall new GM method of production.

What are the benefits to our customers? We are already the leader in safety. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has rated GM cars best for nine consecutive years, based on overall injury claim experience. Now, in only the past few years, we've greatly improved the quality of the fit and finish of our cars. The driveability (that's the way the powertrain operates when it's in the car) of our cars has also improved significantly, according to our customer oriented quality audit.

In fact, based on this rigorous audit, many GM cars are already world class. We are vying with our most formidable competitors to see who will set the standards for the world.

Our goal is to be the undisputed quality leader in every price class in which we compete. And we're on the way.

The vision is paying off.

This advertisement is part of our continuing effort to give customers useful information about their cars and trucks and the company that builds them.

GM
MARK OF EXCELLENCE

Chevrolet • Pontiac
Oldsmobile • Buick
Cadillac • GMC Truck

"The Aristocats" (1970), a full-length Walt Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "Outrageous Fortune" (†). From April 27: Theatre closed.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Project X" (directed by Jonathan Kaplan), with Matthew Broderick.
Theatre 2: "Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol" (Jim Drake), with Steve Guttenberg.
Theatre 3: "Lethal Weapon" (†).
Theatre 4: "Blind Date" (†).
Theatre 5: "Burglar" (Hugh Wilson), with Whoopi Goldberg.
Theatre 6: Through April 23: "Angel Heart" (†). From April 24: "Platoon" (†).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (757-2408)
Through April 30: "Tin Men" (†).
From May 1: "Creepshow 2" (Michael Gornick).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 2: Through April 23: "A Nightmare on Elm Street, Part 3: Dream Warriors" (Chuck Russell). From April 24: "My Demon Lover" (Charles Loventhal), with Scott Valentine.
Theatre 3: Through April 30: "Hollywood Shuffle" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend. From May 1: "American Ninja 2" (Sam Firstenberg).
Theatre 4: Through April 30: "Outrageous Fortune" (†). From May 1: "American Ninja 2."

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
Through April 23: "Platoon" (†).
From April 24: "Extreme Prejudice" (Walter Hill), with Nick Nolte and Powers Boothe.

Movieland, B'way at 47th. (757-8320)
"The Secret of My Success" (Herbert Ross), with Michael J. Fox and Helen Slater.

New Embassy 49th Street, 49th St. near Seventh Ave. (757-7003)
Through April 30: "The Aristocats" (1970), a full-length Walt Disney animated film. (No performances Monday through Wednesday, April 27-29.)
From May 1: Theatre closed.

U.A. Twin 1 and 2, B'way at 49th. (247-1635)
Theatre 1: Through April 23: "Silent Night, Deadly Night, Part 2." From April 24: "Slaughter High."
Theatre 2: Through April 23: "Crocodile Dundee" (Peter Faiman), with Paul Hogan. From April 24: "The Princess Academy" (Bruce Block).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through April 23: "The Return of Martin Guerre" (1983; directed by Daniel Vigne; in French), with Gérard Depardieu and Nathalie Baye; and "Danton" (1983; Andrzej Wajda; in French), with Gérard Depardieu.
April 24-25: "Witness" (1985; Peter Weir), with Harrison Ford, Kelly McGillis, Josef Sommer, and Jan Rubeš; and "Breaker Morant" (1980; Bruce Beresford), with Edward Woodward.
April 26: "Querelle" (1983; Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Brad Davis, Franco Nero, and Jeanne Moreau; and "The Moon in the Gutter" (1983; Jean-Jacques Beineix; in French), with Gérard Depardieu and Nastassia Kinski.
April 27-28: "Salvador" (1986; Oliver Stone), with James Woods and John Savage; and "Missing" (1982; Costa-Gavras), with Jack Lemmon, Sissy Spacek, Melanie Mayron, and John Shea.
April 29-30: "Re-Animator" (1985; Stuart Gordon), with Jeffrey Combs; and "Death Race 2000" (†).
May 1-2: "Amarcord" (1974; Federico Fellini; in Italian), with Bruno Zanin; and "The Clowns" (1971; Federico Fellini; in Italian).

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Film Forum 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
April 22: "Bonjour Tristesse" (1958; Otto Preminger), with Deborah Kerr, David Niven, and Jean Seberg; and "Bhowani Junction" (1956; George Cukor), with Ava Gardner, Stewart Granger, and Bill Travers.
April 23: "Some Came Running" (1959; Vincente Minnelli), with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Shirley MacLaine, and Martha Hyer; and "The Long, Hot Summer" (1958; Martin Ritt), with Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Anthony Franciosa, and Orson Welles.
April 24-25: "The Diary of a Chambermaid" (1964; Luis Buñuel; in French), with Jeanne Moreau; and "Lola" (1962; Jacques Demy; in French), with Anouk Aimée and Marc Michel.
April 26-27: "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" (1968; Sergio Leone), with Clint Eastwood.
April 28-29: "The Apartment" (1960; Billy Wilder), with Jack Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine, and Fred MacMurray; and "Kiss Me, Stupid" (†).
April 30: "The Fall of the Roman Empire" (1964; Anthony Mann), with Sophia Loren, Stephen Boyd, Alec Guinness, James Mason, and Christopher Plummer.
May 1-2: "High and Low" (1963; Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Toshiro Mifune.

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
April 22: "A King in New York" (1957; Charlie Chaplin), with Chaplin; and three Chaplin short silent films—"The Pawnshop" (1916), "A Night in the Show" (1915), and "The Adventurer" (1917).
April 23-25: "Modern Times" (1936; Charlie Chaplin; a silent film), with Chaplin and Paulette Goddard; and four Chaplin short silent films—"One A.M." (1916), "The Immigrant" (1917), "The Rink" (1916), and "Making a Living" (1914).
April 26-27: "Battling Butler" (1926; Buster Keaton; a silent film), with Keaton; "Seven Chances" (1925; Buster Keaton; a silent film), with Keaton; and two Keaton short silent films—"The Goat" (1921) and "The Love Nest" (1923).
April 28-29: "The Navigator" (1924; Buster Keaton and Donald Crisp; a silent film), with Keaton; "Go West" (1925; Buster Keaton; a silent film), with Keaton; and two Keaton short silent films—"The Scarecrow" (1922) and "The Paleface" (1922).
April 30: "The Saphead" (†); and four Keaton short silent films—"Balloonatic" (1923), "Electric House" (1922), "Frozen North" (1922), and "Neighbors" (1922).
May 1-2: "College" (1927; James Horne; a silent film), with Buster Keaton; "The Three Ages" (1923; Buster Keaton and Edward Cline; a silent film); and two Keaton short silent films—"Cops" (1922) and "My Wife's Relations" (1923).

Thalia, B'way at 95th. (222-3370)
April 22: "Throne of Blood" (1957; Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Toshiro Mifune; and "I Live in Fear" (1955; Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Toshiro Mifune.
April 23: "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" (1985; Tim Burton), with Pee-wee Herman; and "Repo Man" (1984; Alex Cox), with Emilio Estevez and Harry Dean Stanton.
April 24: "Pink Floyd, The Wall" (1982; Alan Parker); and "Invitation au Voyage" (1983; Peter Del Monte; in French).
April 25: "Rebel Without a Cause" (1955; Nicholas Ray), with James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, Corey Allen, and Nick Adams; and "East of Eden" (1955; Elia Kazan), with Julie Harris, James Dean, Raymond Massey, and Richard Davalos.
April 26: "Querelle" (1983; Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Brad Davis, Franco Nero, and Jeanne Moreau; and "Les Abysses" (1964; Nico Papatakis; in French).
April 27: "Spetters" (1981; Paul Verhoeven; in Dutch); and "Smithereens" (1982; Susan Seidelman), with Susan Berman.
April 28: "Wetherby" (1985; David Hare), with Vanessa Redgrave; and "Julia" (†).
April 29: "Health" (1980; Robert Altman), with Carol Burnett, Glenda Jackson, Lauren Bacall, and James Garner; and "Streamers" (1983; Robert Altman), with Matthew Modine.
April 30: "Hell's Angels" (1930; Howard Hughes and James Whale), with Jean Harlow and Ben Lyon; and "Dirigible" (†).
May 1-2: "Dance Hall Racket" (1956), with Lenny Bruce; and "Lenny Bruce Without Tears" (1972).

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)
April 22: "The Damned" (1969; Luchino Visconti), with Dirk Bogarde, Ingrid Thulin, and Helmut Berger; and "The Conformist" (1970; Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda.
April 23: "Love Happy" (1950; David Miller), with the Marx Brothers; and "Variety Girl" (1947; George Marshall), with Mary Hatcher, Olga San Juan, and William Demarest.
April 24-25: "Link" (1986; Richard Franklin), with Terence Stamp and Elisabeth Shue; and "Quest for Fire" (1982; Jean-Jacques Annaud), with Everett McGill.
April 26: "The General" (1926; Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman; a silent film), with Keaton; "College" (1927; James Horne; a silent film), with Buster Keaton; and "Balloonatic" (1923), a Keaton short silent film.
April 27: "Shoot the Piano Player" (1960; François Truffaut; in French), with Charles Aznavour; and "Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me" (1973; François Truffaut; in French), with Bernadette Lafont.
April 28: "Imitation of Life" (1959; Douglas Sirk), with Lana Turner, John Gavin, Sandra Dee, and Juanita Moore; and "The First Legion" (1951; Douglas Sirk).
April 29: "California Split" (1974; Robert Altman), with George Segal and Elliott Gould; and "Come Back to the 5 & Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean" (1982; Robert Altman), with Sandy Dennis, Cher, and Karen Black.
April 30: "A Woman of Distinction" (1950; Edward Buzzell), with Ray Milland, Rosalind Russell, and Edmund Gwenn; and "The Man from the Diners' Club" (1963; Frank Tashlin), with Danny Kaye, Martha Hyer, and Cara Williams.
May 1-2: "In the Realm of the Senses" (1977; Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese), with Eiko Matsuda and Tatsuya Fuji; and "The Beast" (1975; Walerian Borowczyk; in French), with Sirpa Lane.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
April 22: "The Shopworn Angel" (1938; H. C. Potter), with Margaret Sullavan and James Stewart; and "The Shop Around the

Corner" (1940; Ernst Lubitsch), with Margaret Sullavan and James Stewart.

April 23: "Moss Rose" (1947; Gregory Ratoff), with Victor Mature and Peggy Cummins; and "None but the Lonely Heart" (1944; Clifford Odets), with Ethel Barrymore, Cary Grant, and Barry Fitzgerald.

April 24-25: "Walkabout" (1971; Nicolas Roeg); and "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975; Peter Weir), with Rachel Roberts and Dominic Guard.

April 26: "Blonde Venus" (1932; Josef von Sternberg), with Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Cary Grant, and Dickie Moore; and "Shanghai Express" (1932; Josef von Sternberg), with Marlene Dietrich, Clive Brook, and Warner Oland.

April 27: "Los Olvidados" (1950; "The Young and the Damned;" Luis Buñuel; in Spanish); and "Viridiana" (1961; Luis Buñuel; in Spanish), with Francisco Rabal and Silvia Pinal.

April 28: "Auntie Mame" (1958; Morton da Costa), with Rosalind Russell, Forrest Tucker, and Coral Browne; and "His Girl Friday" (1940; Howard Hawks), with Rosalind Russell, Cary Grant, and Ralph Bellamy.

April 29: "40 Carats" (†) and "Cactus Flower" (†).

April 30: "Joseph Andrews" (†); and "The Amorous Adventures of Moll Flanders" (1965; Terence Young), with Kim Novak and Richard Johnson.

May 1-2: "The Cat and the Canary" (1939; Elliott Nugent), with Paulette Goddard and Bob Hope; and "The Old Dark House" (1932; James Whale), with Charles Laughton, Melvyn Douglas, Raymond Massey, Boris Karloff, and Gloria Stuart.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490; a limited number of tickets are available to those applying for them in person at the museum after 11 on the day of the showing.)

THEATRE 1: April 23 at 7: "The Yoke" (1959; directed by Oscar Torres), "The Bridge" (1954; Amilcar Tirado), and "Brainless John" (1959; Luis Maisonet), all films in Spanish, with no English subtitles. . . . ¶ April 24 at 2:30 and 6: "Fort Apache" (1948; John Ford), with Henry Fonda, John Wayne, and Shirley Temple. . . . ¶ April 25 at 2: "Mutiny on the Bounty" (1935; Frank Lloyd), with Clark Gable, Charles Laughton, and Franchot Tone. . . . ¶ April 25 at 5 and April 26 at 2: "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood" (1959; William Corrigan), a kinescope of a television special. . . . ¶ April 26 at 5: "Mutiny on the Bounty." . . . ¶ April 28 at 2:30 and 6: "I Met a Murderer" (1939; Roy Kellino), with James Mason and Pamela Kellino. . . . ¶ April 30 at 2:30 and 6: "Tumbleweeds" (1925; King Baggott; a silent film), with William S. Hart and Barbara Bedford. . . . ¶ May 1 at 2:30 and 6: "The Phantom of the Opera" (1943; Arthur Lubin), with Claude Rains and Nelson Eddy. . . . ¶ May 2 at 2 and 5: "Coquette" (1929; Sam Taylor), with Mary Pickford and Johnny Mack Brown.

THEATRE 2: April 23 at 3 and 6:30: "Tigertown" (1985; David Rosenberg) and "Burley: Growing Tobacco in America" (1985; Robby Henson and Doron Sclair), both documentaries. . . . ¶ April 26 at 3 and 5:30: "The Baseball Team" (1951; Jack Delano; in Spanish, with no English subtitles), a documentary. . . . ¶ April 30 at 3 and 6:30: "Citizens" (1986; Richard W. Adams), a documentary. . . . ¶ May 1 at 3: "Made in the Bronx" (1981; Susan Fanchel) and "On the Bowery" (1956; Lionel Rogosin). . . . ¶ May 1 at 6:30: A program of animated films by George Griffin. . . . ¶ May 2 at 2:30: "Rectangle and Rectangles" (1985; René Jodoin), "Precious Images" (1986; Chuck Workman), and "The Television Makers" (1986; Newton Meltzer). . . . ¶ May 2 at 5:30: A program of silent films, including "Great Train Robbery" and "The Wrath of the Gods."

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—A series of programs composed of films and video works made during the past two years. The schedule of performances is complicated; our best advice is to phone the museum for titles, schedules, and ticket information. Closed Mondays.

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—April 24 at 7:30: "Wild Geese" (1953; Shiro Toyoda; in Japanese, with English subtitles), with Hideko Takamine. . . . ¶ May 1 at 7:30: "A Page of Madness" (1926; Teinosuke Kinugasa; a Japanese silent film).

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(Unsigned notes are by Pauline Kael; others are by Penelope Gilliatt and Terrence Rafferty.)

Angel Heart—There's no way to separate the occult from the incomprehensible in this Alan Parker film set in 1955. Mickey Rourke plays a private eye who is hired by a mysterious client (Robert De Niro) to search for information about a crooner of the prewar era who has disappeared. Every place Rourke goes is artfully arranged to be scuzzy, and *he's* scuzzy, although women don't seem to mind. He has a cajoling, intimate manner with Elizabeth Whitcraft as a ready-for-action blonde, with Charlotte Rampling as a sullen psychic, and, especially, with the screen's newest sexpot, Lisa Bonet, as a teen-age Mambo priestess who has a penchant for smearing herself with chicken blood. This is a lavishly sombre piece of hokum—funereal and loony. Parker simply doesn't have the gift of making evil seductive, and he edits like a flasher. With Brownie McGhee, Michael Higgins, and Stocker Fontelieu. Parker wrote the screenplay, based on William Hjortsberg's "Falling Angel." Cinematography by Michael Seresin; music by Trevor Jones. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/6/87.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, and Loews Orpheum. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through April 23. . . . ¶ Olympia Quad; through April 26.)

Blind Date—Blake Edwards' latest is a mixture of heartless, anything-for-a-gag slapstick, which is the director's specialty, and romantic comedy, which isn't. The screenplay, by Dale Launer ("Ruthless People"), is like something left over from the fifties: Bruce Willis, of TV's "Moonlighting," plays a bachelor businessman eager to impress his boss, and Kim Basinger is the sexy blind date who turns his big business dinner into a shambles. Edwards' set pieces, from the frenetic dinner scene to that screwball-comedy staple the lavish wedding that doesn't come off, aren't snappy enough to make up for the lack of any romantic feeling in the two leads. Willis seems game but self-absorbed (probably because the role doesn't allow him to use the charming/obnoxious frat-boy shtick that's made him popular) and Basinger is blurry: the way Edwards directs her, we never even get a good look at her face. The movie plods along with a jokey but dispirited air, like a sketch on a Bob Hope special. When things get slow, somebody falls into the pool. With John Larroquette, William Daniels, and George Coe.—T.R. (New Gramercy, Gemini, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Blue Velvet—Written and directed by David Lynch, this is possibly the only coming-of-age movie in which sex has the danger and the heightened excitement of a horror picture. The film is consciously purplish and consciously funny, and the two work together in an original, down-home way. The setting is an archetypal small, sleepy city in an indefinite mythic present that feels like the past, and Kyle MacLachlan is Jeffrey, the clean-cut young man who's scared of his dirty thoughts (but wants to have them anyway). He commutes between the blue lady of the night (Isabella Rossellini, who's a dream of a freak) and the sunshine girl he loves (Laura Dern). The movie has so much aural-visual humor and poetry that it's sustained despite the wobbly plot and other weaknesses. With Dennis Hopper, who gives the movie a jolt of horrific energy, and Dean Stockwell, who is a smiling wonder as Ben the sandman. Also with Hope Lange, Priscilla Pointer, Brad Dourif, and Jack Nance. (9/22/86) (Eastside Cinema. Evenings only.)

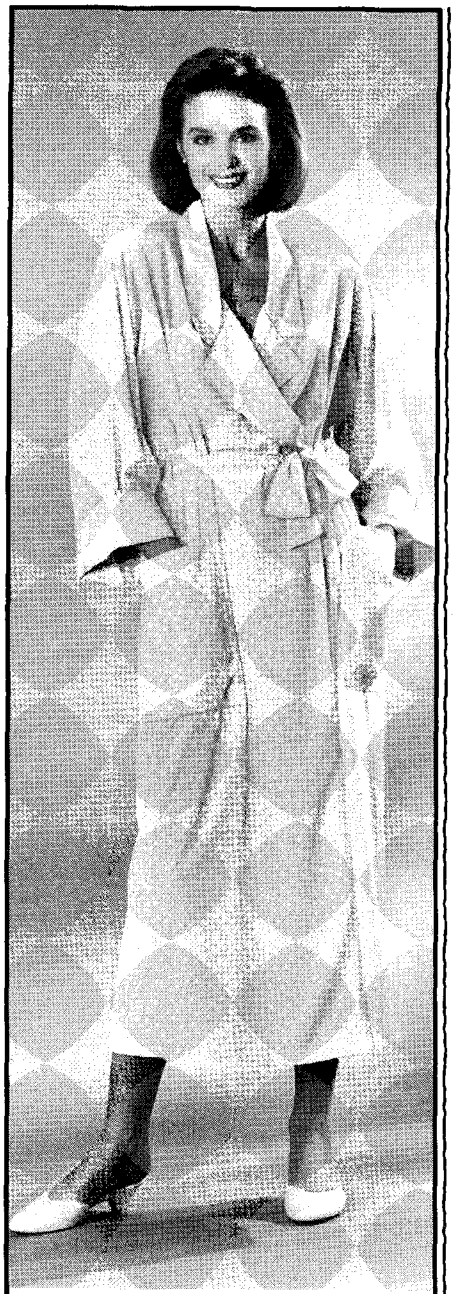
The Brothers Quay—Even at their most opaque, the animated puppet films of the Brothers Quay (Philadelphia-born identical twins who now live in London) are eerily moving, like ancient volumes brought from the obscurity of a Borgesian library into the light. The camera dances gracefully, but the dolls move with the awkward gestures of sleepers only half awakened; they seem to be covered in layers of fine dust, as if layers of meaning had settled on them during years of neglect, and the Quays bring them to life with enormous tenderness, careful not to shake off the history their dazed puppets have acquired. These astonishing artists, working in an unlikely form, awaken our senses, too. They combine a demiurgic, Caligari-like mastery over their creations with the gentle dream archeology of Joseph Cornell: their puppets look less like things invented than like things discovered. This program includes four short films, all produced by Keith Griffiths for Atelier Koninck: "Leoš Janáček: Intimate Excursions;" "The Cabinet of Jan Svankmajer;" "The Epic of Gilgamesh" (also known as "Little Songs of the Chief Officer of Hunar Louse, or This Unnameable Little Broom"); and "Street of Crocodiles," based on the writings of Bruno Schulz.—T.R. (Film Forum 1; starting April 29.)

Cactus Flower (1969)—A movie adaptation of the kind of Broadway play that drives you to the movies. Full of forced, unnaturally fast quips that one might, in a state of extreme exhaustion, find fairly funny. With Walter Matthau as a dentist, Ingrid Bergman as his assistant, and Goldie Hawn, whom God must have sent to us. But why didn't He provide her with better material? (She plays the dentist's mistress.) Directed by Gene Saks. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 29.)

Death Race 2000 (1975)—Low-budget sci-fi, from an often amusing suspense script by Robert Thom and Charles B. Griffith, directed by Paul Bartel in his ingratiatingly tacky, sophomoric manner. The picture zips along, and there's a flip craziness about it—it's an ideal drive-in movie. In the role of a legendary driver in a killer race (points are scored for every pedestrian run down), David Carradine has star presence, and his easy, confident manner gives the film some class; he's very elegant in his black leather clothes and black leather cape. Sylvester Stallone is rather funny as the slobbish, stupid villain, who's always expostulating in anger or disgust. With Louisa Moritz as the crude dumb blonde, and Simone Griffith. Produced by Roger Corman. (Cinema Village; April 29-30.)

Dirigible (1931)—Popular, handsomely produced action film starring a team of he-man heroes—Jack Holt and Ralph Graves. This team appeared in "Submarine," "Flight," and, finally, "Dirigible"—all three directed by Frank Capra, and all three featuring enormous, photogenic disasters. The heroine of this one was the most disaster-prone of all the movie ladies—the screamer, Fay Wray. With Hobart Bosworth, Clarence Muse, and Roscoe Karns. (Thalia; April 30.)

40 Carats (1973)—The sort of strained, wisecracking frivolity that can be a hit on Broadway but all too often congeals on the screen. The affair of the forty-year-old Liv Ullmann and the twenty-two-year-old Edward Albert is meant to be romantic and slightly daring, but the miscast Ullmann doesn't have the dryness for comedy. She's much too touching and anxious for her superficial role, and she and the wet-lipped young Albert are a dismaying pair. Directed by Milton Katselas, from Leonard Gershe's adaptation of the Broadway play by Jay Presson Allen, based on a Parisian success by Pierre Barillet and J. C. Gredy. With Gene Kelly, who looks too old to be Ullmann's ex-husband but has a few likable bits, and Binnie Barnes, Deborah Raffin, Nancy Walker, Rosemary Murphy, Natalie Schaefer, Billy Green Bush, and Don



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Porter. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 29.)

Joseph Andrews (1978)—*Tony Richardson's* spirited version of the Fielding novel. Ann-Margret plays Lady Booby, a luscious upstart whose dress and manner are copied by her splendidly slipshod maid, Mrs. Slipslop (Beryl Reid); John Gielgud plays a doctor who makes no distinction between the well and the dead in his search for a patient; and Michael Hordern, in a wig that makes him look like a King Charles spaniel that has just come out of the wet, plays a parson. Everything is blithe, exact, and eager, floating along without weight.—P.G. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 30.)

Julia (1977)—Jane Fonda as Lillian Hellman, Jason Robards as Dashiell Hammett, and Vanessa Redgrave as Julia in the film version of Hellman's story about her smuggling bribe money into Nazi Germany, from her book of memoirs "Pentimento." Directed by Fred Zinnemann, from a script by Alvin Sargent, it has been made in conservative—classical humanist—style. The film's constraint is frustrating, because Jane Fonda has the power and invention to go further in the character; she could crack the cautious, contemplative surface and take us places we've never been to. With Rosemary Murphy and Hal Holbrook as Dorothy Parker and Alan Campbell, and Meryl Streep, John Glover, Cathleen Nesbitt, Maximilian Schell, Maurice Denham, and Susan Jones as the young Lillian and Lisa Pelikan as the young Julia. (Thalia; April 28.)

Kangaroo—*In this ponderous adaptation of* D. H. Lawrence's semi-autobiographical 1923 novel set in Australia, director Tim Burstall seems to have put more energy into photographing the wild landscapes than into shaping the equally undisciplined dramatic material. (Lawrence is said to have written the book in just five weeks.) The hero, a self-exiled English novelist named Richard Somers (Colin Friels), disillusioned with Europe, finds in the masculine frontier society of Australia some sweaty, two-fisted embodiments of his ideals of male comradeship: fiery Socialists and muscular Fascists woo him, and he flirts shamelessly with both. The film doesn't do justice to either the drama or the comedy of Somers' situation. Burstall often cuts off scenes before the characters' ideas are clear, and Friels gives a bafflingly passive performance—he never manages to fuse Somers' foolishness and his intelligence into a single forceful personality. The radiant Judy Davis, as the writer's German-born wife, animates her scenes with her passionate, skeptical presence. With John Walton, Julie Nihill, and Hugh Keays-Byrne, hammy and uncharismatic as the Fascist leader Kangaroo.—T.R. (Paris; through April 23. . . . ¶ R.K.O. Art Greenwich Twin; starting April 24. . . . ¶ Cinema 3; starting May 1.)

Kiss Me, Stupid (1964)—This Billy Wilder marital-mixup comedy, a box-office failure, was plagued by bad luck from the start: Peter Sellers, who had been cast as the central character (a composer stuck teaching piano in the desert town of Climax, Nevada), had a heart attack a few weeks into shooting and was replaced by Ray Walston, who is singularly charmless in the role. The plot has the composer attempting to sell his songs to a lecherous star, Dino (Dean Martin), who happens to be passing through town, but he's so fearful that Dino will seduce his wife (Felicia Farr) that he sends her away overnight and brings in the local B-girl, Polly the Pistol (Kim Novak), to pose as his wife. The central miscasting is compounded by the chortling tone, the overemphatic double-entendres, and the drab look of the film, but there is something going on in it. Maybe because of all the dumb leering, Kim Novak is touching in her dreamy-floozy, Marilyn Monroe-like role, and her lostness holds the film together. With Henry Gibson, Cliff Osmond, Alice Pearce, Doro Merande, Barbara Pepper, and Mel Blanc. Script by Wilder and I. A. L. Diamond, suggested by a play by Anna Bonacci. (Film Forum 2; April 28-29.)

Law of Desire—This flamboyantly glamorous homosexual fantasy by Madrid's gagster-artist Pedro Almodóvar is satirical, romantic, metaphorical; it has wonderful jokes and the exaggerated plot of an absurdist Hollywood melodrama. It doesn't disguise its narcissism; it turns it into bright-colored tragicomedy. And even when it loses its beat (after a murder) there's always something happening. *Carmen Maura, a powerful actress in the* manner of the early Anna Magnani, with the trippiness and self-mockery of Bette Midler, plays Tina, a transsexual who has a hot, roiling temperament. Tina's celebrity brother Pablo (Eusebio Poncela) directs classy homoerotic films. One night, Pablo takes home Antonio (Antonio Banderas), a government minister's son, who has been stalking him; by morning, Antonio loves him, is determined to possess him completely, and refuses to get out of his life. With Miguel Molina as Pablo's true love, Manuela Velasco as little Ada, and the male transvestite Bibi Andersen as Tina's lesbian ex-lover. In Spanish. (4/20/87) (Cinema Studio.)

Lethal Weapon—In this high-concept urban thriller, Mel Gibson and Danny Glover run through their buddy-buddy routines with the skill of veteran infielders: Gibson, as a suicidal L.A. cop, is as lithe and quick-witted as a shortstop, while his partner Glover, a paunchily contented family man, remains (thanklessly) rock-steady at first base. The movie's central joke is that the depressive Gibson, a crack shot *and* a martial-arts wizard, is so unconcerned with his own safety that he pushes sticky situations to perilous extremes—he can't seem to get through a whole day without killing someone. It's not exactly "Yojimbo"—neither the screenwriter, Shane Black, nor the director, Richard Donner, has the style for black comedy. Windshields shatter; copters swoop; bare-chested Vietnam vets are tortured; a teen-age girl, stripped to her underwear, screams; sleek cars smash picture windows, uproot hydrants, burst into great balls of fire on the freeway—and it's all as depressing as only top-of-the-line Hollywood entertainment can be. With Gary Busey, Mitchell Ryan, Darlene Love, and Traci Wolfe.—T.R. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, D. W. Griffith, R.K.O. 86th St. Twin, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Outrageous Fortune—Two young New York actresses of contrasting types—Shelley Long is a lofty ditz and Bette Midler is a vulgarian-sexpot Kewpie doll—discover they've been sharing a lover (Peter Coyote). When he disappears, they chase him across the country to the cliffs and mesas of New Mexico, becoming friends along the way. Near the start, there are a few snappers for Midler, and she gets to shoot some wonderful derisive looks at Long. Though the gags aren't fresh, the screenwriter, Leslie Dixon, knows how to construct them. But with Arthur Hiller directing much of the dialogue turns into squawking, and the movie is flattened out and rackety, with Midler doing her damnedest to pump sass and energy into it. Peter Coyote gives a polished and wily performance in the first section, before he gets lost in the noise; also with Robert Prosky, George Carlin, Florence Stanley, John Schuck, Ji-Tu Cumbuka, and Jerry Zaks. (2/23/87) (23rd St. West Triplex.) Evenings only. . . . ¶ Baronet; through April 23. . . . ¶ Olympia Quad; through April 26, evenings only. . . . ¶ Embassy; through April 30.)

Platoon—Vietnam, as seen by the writer-director Oliver Stone, who dropped out of Yale and, feeling, he says, that he needed to be an anonymous common soldier, enlisted and saw action with the 25th Infantry along the Cambodian border. Charlie Sheen plays Chris, the autobiographical figure (who, regrettably, narrates the movie by reading aloud the letters he writes home to his grandmother). Chris finds two authority figures in two sergeants who represent good and evil. Willem Dafoe's Sgt. Elias is a supersensitive hippie pothead, who cares about the men—he's a veteran fighter who's kept his soul. Tom Berenger's Sgt. Barnes is a kickass boozer—a psycho whose scarred, dead-eyed face suggests the spirit of war. There are fine, scary scenes, but there are others where you think, It's a bit much. The movie crowds you; it doesn't give you room to have an honest emotion. And when Chris calmly, deliberately shoots a fellow-soldier, and the murder is presented as an unambiguous, justified execution, you may wonder at the mixture of war elegy and pulp revenge fantasy. With Keith David, Forest Whitaker, and Kevin Dillon. Cinematography by Robert Richardson. (1/12/87) (Loews 34th Street Showplace. . . . ¶ Loews New York Twin, Loews 84th Street

Sixplex, and Loews Astor Plaza; through April 23. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; starting April 24.)

Radio Days—Woody Allen looks back fondly, in a warm, amber-toned reminiscence of what radio meant to him and his family at the start of the Second World War. The actors who make up the eleven-year-old hero's lower-middle-class Jewish family in Rockaway Beach are a wonderful group of comedians—Michael Tucker, Julie Kavner, Josh Mostel, Renee Lippin, Joy Newman, Dianne Wiest—yet they're never up close, at the center of our attention. Allen has reduced everyone to harmlessness. It's pure nostalgia—the past sweetened and trivialized. The mood is soft regret: he treats the old songs (the film incorporates a generous assortment of hits) as a value that we've lost. As he spells it out, the public's memories of the stars of radio become dimmer each year. The question the film asks—its theme—is "Will our fame last?" With Mia Farrow as the one character whom we follow over a period of years, as she rises from cigarette girl to jewel-decked radio star, and Seth Green as the boy, Gina DeAngelis, Danny Aiello, Denise Dummont, Tito Puente, Jeff Daniels, Tony Roberts, Wallace Shawn, and Diane Keaton. The cinematography is by Carlo Di Palma. (3/9/87) (Loews New York Twin. . . . ¶ Loews 34th Street Showplace; through April 23.)

Raising Arizona—This broad farce is no big deal, but it has a cornpone-surreal quality and a rambunctious charm. It's about baby love—about people who feel they can't live without an infant to cuddle. When Edwina, or Ed—played by Holly Hunter—discovers she can't have a child, she's a wreck until she hears about male quintuplets that have been born to a woman who took fertility drugs; then she torments her husband, Hi (Nicolas Cage), until he goes to steal one of them. As soon as Hi plunks a quint into her arms, she yowls, "I love him so much!" Hi and Ed live in a yellow mobile home in a Tempe, Arizona, trailer park at the edge of a Pop-art version of the desert. Everything in the film is warped and flipped out; the light seems fluorescent, as if the world were a twenty-four-hour supermarket. Joel and Ethan Coen, who did the writing together—Joel directed and Ethan produced (with Mark Silverman)—have a knack for hick-suburban dialogue (it's backed up by banjos and, sometimes, a yodeller). And the film is storyboarded like a comic strip; it has a galumphing tempo. With John Goodman and William Forsythe as the escaped-convict brothers who become gaga over the babe, Trey Wilson as the quints' hardheaded father, Randall (Tex) Cobb as the biker, and Frances McDormand and Sam McMurray. Cinematography by Barry Sonnenfeld. (4/20/87) (Bay Cinema, Beekman, Waverly, and Embassy 72nd St.)

A Room with a View—Adapted from the early novel by E. M. Forster, this is a whimsical social comedy about a muddled young English girl (Helena Bonham-Carter) who desires yet fears sexual love; she runs away from the man (Julian Sands) who stirs her emotions, and becomes engaged to a rich twit (Daniel Day Lewis). Bonham-Carter lacks the carriage and presence of a trained actress, and Sands is playing Forster's flimsy—almost abstract—dream of a natural, uninhibited lover, and is rather vague. But the movie is well paced, and it never loses its hold on a viewer's affections, because it's so thoroughly inhabited. It's more than a little precious, but it's a piece of charming foolishness. With Denholm Elliott, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Simon Callow, and Rosemary Leach. It was directed by James Ivory, from a script by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala that pares down the text skillfully and takes much of its lively, dizzy dialogue directly from Forster. (3/24/86) (68th St. Playhouse, and Quad Cinema.)

The Saphead (1920)—Buster Keaton was twenty-five when he made this first feature, a noble comic masterpiece about an immensely rich goof's passion for a girl called Agnes. The film lingered in Keaton's possession, unseen by the public, for decades. In 1962, Raymond Rohauer began to untangle the legal knots that had confined it to obscurity, and it was eventually transferred from tinted nitrate stock to Technicolor safety film. It is a joyous movie. The august young Keaton is clearly already a master of his stoic craft.—P.G. (Regency; April 30.)

Sorekara (And Then)—In his 1984 comedy "The Family Game," the talented young Japanese director Yoshimitsu Morita showed an exhausting capacity for invention. He kept his satire on middle-class life in contemporary Tokyo spinning so fast that his wild notions seemed to pick up centrifugal force; by the end, they were just whizzing out into space, granting us a puzzling glimpse before they disappeared forever. "Sorekara," a genteel love story set in 1909, has an entirely different tone: this film is as overloaded with nuance and exquisite reserve as the earlier one was with zaniness. Morita stretches a thin plot, about a near-romance between a sensitive upper-class idler (Yusaku Matsuda) and an unhappy married woman (Miwako Fujitani), into a hundred and thirty minutes of almost oppressive delicacy. Though it's often lovely, "Sorekara" is too much of a very fragile thing: all cherry blossoms and rainy streets, awkward silences and melancholy sips of *sake*. Screenplay by Tomomi Tsutsui, based on a novel by Soseki Natsume. Cinematography by Yonezo Maeda. With Kaoru Kobayashi and Chishu Rhy. In Japanese.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza; through April 30.)

Swimming to Cambodia—Jonathan Demme directed this concert film of Spalding Gray's stage performance; it was shot before live audiences in November, 1986, at the Performing Garage, in lower Manhattan. Working on a minimalist basis, with nothing but Gray and his props, Demme uses the lighting and shifts in camera angles and a musical score by Laurie Anderson to virtuoso rhythmic effect. Gray presents a droll, vaguely stream-of-consciousness report of his life as an actor, and of how he happened to be cast in the small role of an American diplomat in "The Killing Fields." The high point of his monologue comes when he hears about our secret bombing of Cambodia, and what the Khmer Rouge did to the Cambodian people in 1975, driving them out of the cities and to their deaths. He's incredulous and horrified as he describes the exodus; he's an actor who has discovered strong material, and he builds the tension. But he doesn't know that heating up his piddling stage act by an account of the Cambodian misery is about the most squalid thing anyone could do. (4/6/87) (Cinema Studio.)

Tin Men—Written and directed by Barry Levinson, this movie about aluminum-siding salesmen in Baltimore in 1963 is a middle-aged echo of his 1982 film "Diner." He's making essentially the same point—that guys relate better to guys than they do to girls. The picture centers on a feud between two strutting tin men—Richard Dreyfuss and Danny DeVito—who work for different outfits, and on Dreyfuss's trying to score off DeVito by seducing his wife (Barbara Hershey). The salesmen's scams are entertaining, but their spritzing is too tame, and the action is prolonged with limp, wavering scenes. Levinson wants to be on the humane side of every issue. The best work is done by the supporting players. Dreyfuss's sales team includes John Mahoney as his partner, and Seymour Cassel, Matt Craven, Richard Portnow, Alan Blumenfeld, and Michael Tucker as the boss. DeVito's team includes Jackie Gayle as his partner, and Stanley Brock, Bruno Kirby, and J. T. Walsh as the boss. (4/6/87) (Cinema II, Waverly, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through April 30.)

Wild Thing—Screenwriter John Sayles, who has done fairly distinguished hackwork in the past—his scripts for "The Howling" and "Alligator" added some funky wit to the pictures' formula plots—seems to have lost his flair for pulp in this low-budget adventure movie. It's the story of a boy—orphaned in 1969, when his hippie parents were gunned down by a dope dealer and a crooked cop—who lives as a kind of noble savage among the derelicts, hustlers, and psychos of an inner-city district called The Zone, and grows up to be a Batman-like avenger of urban wrongs. This might have been entertaining, but first-time director Max Reid drifts in and out of comic-book style, and Sayles' work is perfunctory—understandably, since the movie is basically a grade-B knockoff of his own "The Brother from Another Planet." His gestures toward giving "Wild Thing" a street-wise feel are smug, like a jeans commercial. With Rob Knepper (as Wild Thing), Kathleen Quinlan, Robert Davi, and Betty Buckley. The story is credited to Sayles and Larry Stamper.—T.R. (Quad Cinema; through April 23.)

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

A FRIEND writes:

Andy Warhol was the most famous artist of our time. The memorial Mass in his honor at St. Patrick's Cathedral on April 1st made this abundantly clear; it had the character of a state funeral, with people coming from as far away as Los Angeles and Milan to attend. There were so many celebrities among the more than two thousand mourners that traffic on Fifth Avenue was disrupted by spectators and photographers trying to get a glimpse of them. No other twentieth-century artist—not even Picasso—could have drawn this sort of crowd, and it is difficult to think of any other public personality who could have done so, either.

All this is a little hard to account for. Warhol's fame did not seem to have much to do with his art. He was neither the best nor the most popular artist of his era, and his prices—a reliable barometer in the commercialized art world that Warhol did so much to foster—did not keep pace with those of several of his less famous contemporaries. Except for the paintings of Campbell's soup cans, with which he began his career in art (his second career, that is; he had already made it big as a commercial artist), and those silk screens of Marilyn and Mao, who outside the art world could identify a single picture by Warhol? And yet nearly everyone knew him by sight—those strange, masklike features and that thatch of chalk-white hair. I was walking up Madison Avenue one day in the mid-nineteen-seventies, past a building site where construction workers were taking their lunch break, and I heard one of them say, "Look, there's Andy." Sure enough, Warhol was on the opposite corner. What other contemporary artist had that kind of instant recognizability?

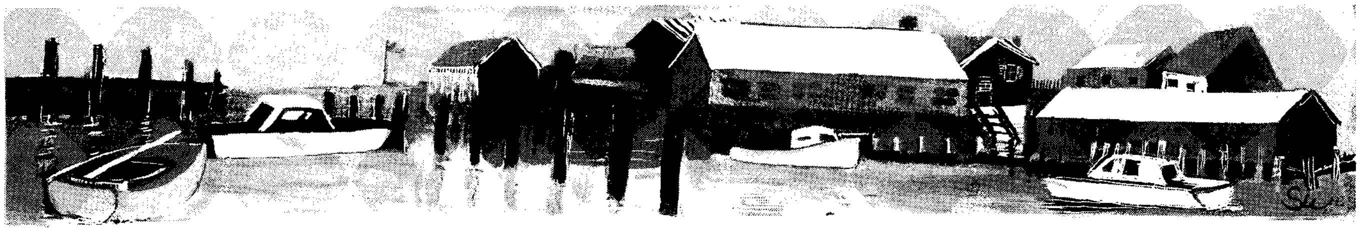
Nevertheless, he was not really a public figure. He turned up often enough in the gossip columns, as a guest at this party or that social event, but for the most part he lived quietly, kept to himself, and was famously mute. In 1968, a crazy woman walked into his Union Square studio (called the Factory) and shot him twice in the midsection with a .32 automatic. He nearly died. By a weird irony, though, his shooting did not get the continued news coverage it might have, because thirty-five hours later another crazy person shot Robert Kennedy, fatally, in Los Angeles. The truth is that the man who lived behind Warhol's mask was virtually unknown. So what is the explanation? How did this sickly child of immigrant (Czech) working-class parents in Pittsburgh become so famous and stay so famous, right through the nineteen-seventies and into the nineteen-eighties? The answer, I think, is that he was in some sense a true mirror of his time.

In a thoroughly unsystematic effort to test this theory, I have made a list of qualities that I associate with Warhol's life and Warhol's career. Other people would no doubt come up with an entirely different list—mine leaves out a lot—but I offer it anyway to sociologists of the future, on the assumption that you have to start somewhere:

His all-embracing permissiveness. The idea behind Pop art, he said, was that "anybody could do anything," and he applied this to life as well as art. Warhol became a hero to many young people in the sixties because he seemed to be the ultimate anti-parent. Anything you did was O.K., even if you killed yourself doing it.

His passivity. In what went on at the Factory—the drug-taking, the sexual deviation, the exhibitionism—Warhol was never an active participant. He was a voyeur, a lens, registering every nuance of behavior with a movie camera. Some people claimed he exploited sick egos for his own profit, but Warhol's films did not make money. What took place inside the Factory was a pressure-cooker version of certain trends in the culture at large—for example, the disavowal of male authority.

His obsession with fame and celebrity and stardom. This was no put-on. Warhol really did worship Judy Garland, Liz Taylor, Marlon Brando,



Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy, and the other subjects of his multiple-image silk-screen paintings. They formed a glamorous and highly effective defense against the real world—and against any potential pressure for self-knowledge or self-disclosure.

His boundless, though well-concealed, capacity for hard work, and his highly successful effort to equate art-making with money-making in other fields. "Why do people think artists are special?" he said. "It's just another job." His admirers tended to think he was kidding when he talked like that, but I think he meant it.

His apparent lack of emotion. Warhol's most highly charged images—automobile wrecks, electric chairs, Jackie Kennedy in the aftermath of her husband's death—came across with the same deadpan, affectless candor that characterized his silk-screened flowers and his portraits of a cow. Not one ounce of sentiment disturbs the numb silence of these images. "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol," he said, "just look at the surface—of my paintings and films and me—and there I am. There's nothing behind it."

If there is a common thread running through this brief list, it should become clearer in time. What seems striking right now is that the man who once said that in the future everybody would be famous for fifteen minutes has turned out to have such a durable hold on our collective imagination.

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Sizes

MUSEUMGOING has changed so much in recent years—there are the unprecedented crowds that have been attracted to "blockbuster" shows, for example—that a single museumgoer may no longer be able to fully appreciate the museum experience. We therefore sent a pair of reporters—one short and one tall—to the van Gogh exhibition that recently closed at the Metropolitan. Here is their report:

SHORT REPORTER: My life has always been centered on museums. It's not that the best or the happiest things that have happened to me have happened in museums but that somehow I have had to pass through museums in order to get to those things. I took the girl I eventually married to a Montreal museum on our first date; when I was four, I sat in the cafeteria of the Guggenheim on the very day the museum opened, and decided that I would someday live in New York and drop in at the museum for breakfast. The world's museums have always been for me a kind of multiple Biltmore clock: a happy place to gather oneself on the way to an even happier one.

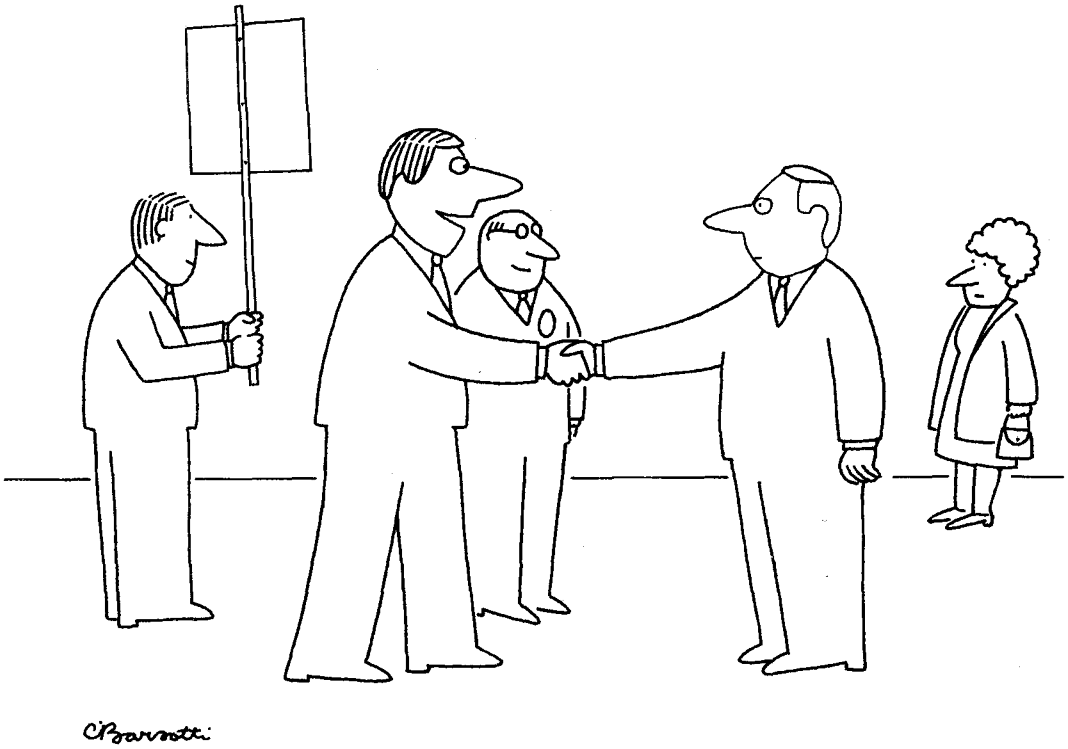
Some of my delight in museums, I'm sure, has to do with my being short. In part, this is because I was always happy in museums as a child, and, for me, to be in a museum today—to be short in a public place—is to be reminded of childhood. (Short people, even if they're not alarmingly short, like me, tend to build private worlds—short wives, short friends, short families—that don't remind us of our diminutiveness.) And in part I'm happy in museums because—though I'm reluctant to admit it even to myself—I like the dodging and bounding about that a short person has to do in a crowded museum: it reflects my sense that to be in a museum is to be on the way somewhere. I have never really liked or trusted those people who stand awestruck in front of great pictures for long periods of time. I like to bounce around among the pictures, like a greedy man in a good kitchen before dinner, lifting all the lids and taking a quick sniff. I have been pleased to notice that this is also true of those who make a profession of looking at pictures. At a blockbuster show, you can always tell the museum professionals from the ordinary museumgoers by the way they move from picture to picture. The ordinary museumgoers just shuffle along; the professionals have the nervous pace of trotting horses. I especially delight in going to museums with tall friends, since it provides both the illusion of childhood and the thrill of superior dexterity. Alongside a tall person at a museum, I am at once a four-year-old with his folks at the Guggenheim and Spud Webb dribbling rings around Manute Bol.

TALL REPORTER: Starting in the Great Hall of the Met, which was as crowded as a shed at Ellis Island, I was jammed in among the cultural immigrants and forced to face yet once more my physical aversion to museums. One knows about museum feet and museum headache. But there is also the unmentionable problem of size. I am tall. I have shoulders. I am clumsy. I take up half again as much space as an average person. I'm not given the space I need by a crowd; I always feel half extruded, like toothpaste squeezed up from the bottom of an old tube. Few or no large men and no very large women—I mean brawny and big-boned, actually—were visible in the Great Hall or at the show itself, upstairs. Such people are not common at art shows. There is a statistical reason, perhaps. Perhaps we grow rich and become patrons and get to go to private showings. Or maybe we become truck drivers, farmers, first sergeants. We die young. We give up culture early. Or we don't even try. I bet you've almost never seen a large man look rapt—or even happy—in a museum. We shrink; we slouch; we huddle retractedly. We look unwatered and limp. We stand at the edge. We look sad.

d. ehrenberg

We *are* sad. Average-size people democratically form long continuous lines that act like prison walls to block our passage. The old and the sweet-faced and the infirm are placed directly in front of us, so that we really have no right to ask for passage. If you're sweet-faced in return, you get a smile, but they won't let you pass. I've noticed that they'll very quickly make room to allow a short grouch through. Keep your eyes open next time and watch. Certain ambitions are socially permitted only to the small.

SHORT REPORTER: Shortness—or, at least, appealing to short people—is, I think, a key but forgotten element in the history of modern painting. I once saw a photograph of the great Ingres exhibition at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1855—the MOMA Picasso show of its day. The pictures were stacked one above another, all the way to the ceiling, like smokers in an opium den. It unnerved me: how could I ever have reviewed such a show? It was the Impressionists who, in their first exhibitions, ended the practice of hanging pictures in tall vertical rows—partly because the practice of "skying" pictures was reminiscent of the politics of the salons, where painters who were out of favor with the hanging committee got spots up near the skylights, and partly because Impressionist landscapes just didn't look good arranged this way. The consequent gift to short people was enormous—it opened up the field of art criticism to all of us.



"Hi there. I'm governor of a large state somewhere out West, and I'm running for President."

And then I think that most great modern painters have been short. Certainly Picasso, certainly Miró. I'm not sure about van Gogh. It occurs to me that, for all I have read about him, I have no real idea of his physical dimensions. (In college, they never taught us that kind of thing. They should have: height, reach, weight.) But as I look at the pictures it seems to me that he must have been short. He has a short man's impatience and a short man's breathlessness of description. The perspectives whistle away from us, rushing past one pictorial incident to the next—the more promising events are always down there near the vanishing point. Where the stylization in, say, Cézanne's landscapes is the consequence of a process of intellectual reduction and refinement, the stylization in van Gogh's is the consequence of an impatient man's desire not to get bogged down in details. Short people discover in adolescence that they will always be short, and too often we compensate by becoming adorable. Van Gogh grew out of that—he's never cute—but he's still *appealing*. "The Starry Night" is a picture painted for a viewer—the way a story by Dickens is a story told for a listener—while a Cézanne landscape is a fugue between two voices that we are allowed to overhear.

TALL REPORTER: I stepped on or brushed against more than a dozen people all told, but then the rooms were very crowded. I found I couldn't talk to my short friend in the midst of so many people. We talked in cleared spaces, where no one else was; when we were talking, we weren't in any trouble—except when I moved backward and stepped on someone.

Of course, you can tell yourself, "Still, I'm tall," but that's a boring thing to say to yourself at a show of often great pictures painted by someone who was not particularly tall. So you don't say it. Few good artists have been really tall. That may be just accident, or it's possible that only artists middle-sized and smaller are likely to be right about visual things. They see the world—ground and distance, objects and colors, light and outline—differently, I bet. Or perhaps they just see it connectedly and with proper drama.

In a good private gallery, someone will seat you and bring in an easel, and will adjust it to your eye level and put the pictures on that. In public museums, I've learned, I had better bend my knees and duck down. I duck down maybe a foot or fourteen inches. When I don't duck down, my eye is set at the point where the drama in the picture is over. I don't start at the real center, or nub. I'm in the sky, the sunlight—in the purer and easier passages. I can see the real drama in the canvas—what's left of the drama after the passage of time and the repairs of art dealers—only if I lower myself a little more than a foot.

The point of greatest interest in most van Gogh paintings is the center of the canvases and below. The drama tends to dwindle as your eye moves up. In the portraits, the busiest level is often at my height, but that is not how these pictures were meant to be seen. And some of the best pictures take up most of their canvases in a particularly brilliant and startling way, very noticeably. Still, if I could have been pushed through the exhibition in a wheelchair it would have been better for me in almost every respect. I am not certain I want to think about all the implications of that. But my eyes would have been at a good height for those pictures.

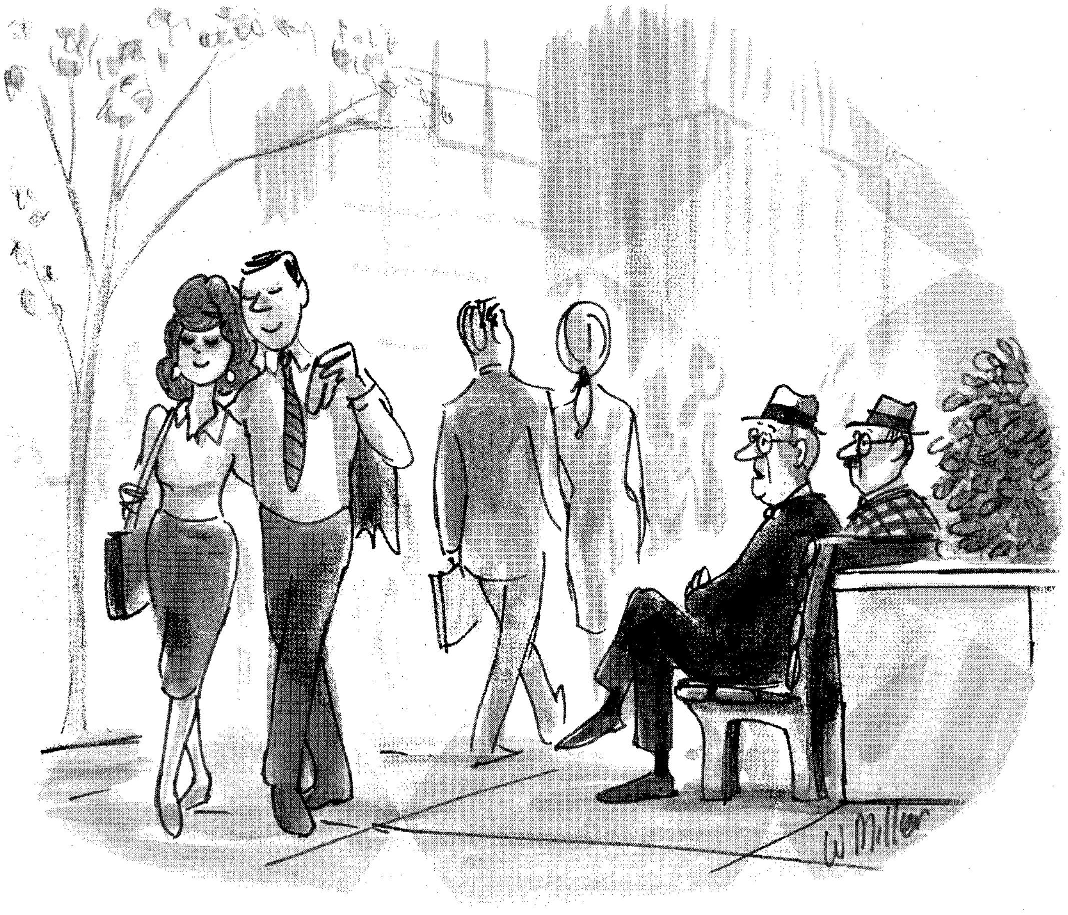
SHORT REPORTER: Short people almost always become bookish. I think that this was true of van Gogh—it's one of the things that make me suspect he was short—and I think that bookishness is the forgotten or overlooked element in his art. He is supposed to be the great intuitive, expressive painter—the inspired madman—but if you read through his letters you soon see that actually no one has ever experienced the world more through his favorite books.

This leads me to my pet theory about van Gogh. Van Gogh *adored* Dickens, saw his work as the type and model of what art could be; and among his favorite works were Dickens' "Christmas Books." Everyone knows "A Christmas Carol," of course, but van Gogh also admired "The Chimes," a lesser-known story, about a porter who goes mad from hearing the church bells during the Christmas holidays. And when did van Gogh—this entirely bookish and literary lonely man, who (as Gauguin pointed out) often seemed to confuse his own experience with things he had read in books—cut off his ear? On Christmas Eve. Maybe he just got carried away by a good book.

I was contemplating this theory when I came on one of the last pictures in the exhibition, a double-square picture of a man and a woman—obviously married, obviously a pair—their faces blurred, standing with mysterious formality in the midst of a forest. It was the first picture in the exhibition that I stood in front of for an amateurishly long time. It is a completely unexcited picture. Van Gogh did not enjoy a happy life, obviously, but I have always thought that his pictures were essentially happy—happy in the bookish, excitable way of the child always rushing to get somewhere. For most painters, the horizontal dimension is the pathetic dimension—people laid out for funerals or lovemaking—but in van Gogh it's just the opposite. His horizontal forms—the bed in his bedroom at Arles, the billiard table—are happy. It's the upright forms, the grownup forms—cypresses, poplars, standing couples—that frighten him. Van Gogh knew what all short people know: verticality is death.

Tall Reporter: I suppose everyone knows that pictures are difficult to paint. You prepare the colors ahead of time, and you have to work before they dry too much or dry entirely. You need a great deal of physical dexterity and physical stamina—back and wrists, legs and neck. Your hand has to keep the strokes and colors alive and apt. The paints on the palette harden; the light varies. Your mood varies; the mood alters your brushstrokes, as does the changing texture of the paint. Painting is harder than dance, some say. You dance it with your visual sense—your eyes—and the brush. Meaning emerges oddly and seems to press on the painting from behind or inside it, like a spirit or a soul. Van Gogh's technique often seems to be dissolving, failing him, and yet, while nothing is quite captured, strange and surprising things are done that are images in themselves, almost ghost things: rocks are painted as if they were as alive as cypresses. The sky becomes the physical and most fully inhabited locus. But then I start with the background, the escape; for me the struggle is background, is merely the prop of van Gogh's revolving sky, his whirling stars or sun. Human struggle seems forgone, and not basic except as a pedestal.

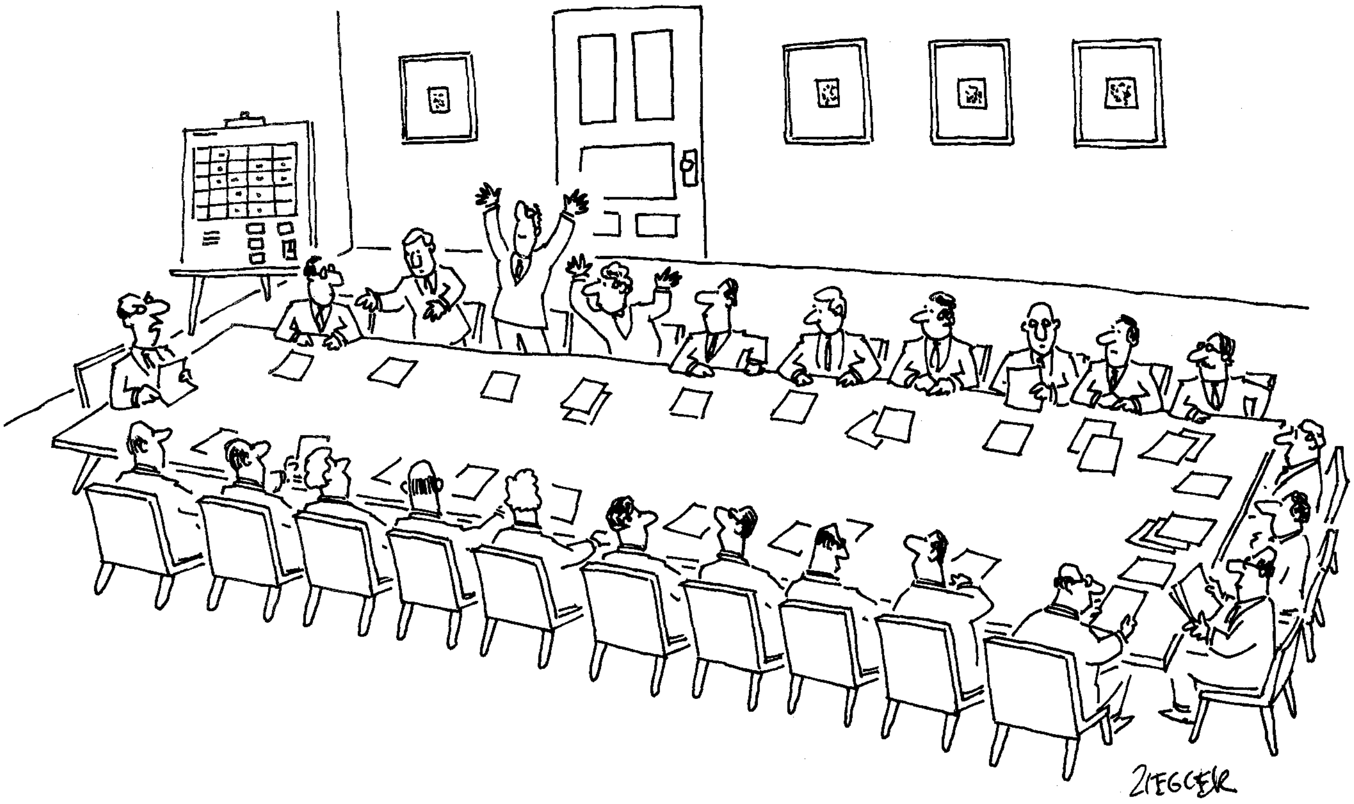
Postscript: *Was* van Gogh short? Finally, we called Charles Moffett, America's leading authority on van Gogh, at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and asked him. Mr. Moffett said that he didn't know—and seemed surprised at his realization that he didn't know. "What a strange thought!" he said. "All these years thinking about him, and I've never known how big or small he was." Mr. Moffett said he'd get back to us, and then called to say that he had no way of saying with authority just how tall van Gogh was. But he said that he had found a photograph of van Gogh seated with Émile Bernard at a café table, and that, assuming that the height of café tables hadn't changed much in a hundred years, he would guess that, standing up, the man seated at that table was probably five six or so—tall for a short man, short for a tall man.



"Springtime in New York. Ah, to be young, in love, and probably making two hundred and seventy-five thousand a year."

Italics

AND, to round off this week's symposium, our walking tour today will be concerned with the changing meanings and significances—the (you should forgive the expression) semiotics—of eccentric typography on signs outside restaurants along Madison Avenue in midtown. (Sorry, the "Midtown: A Neighborhood in



"Please sit down, gentlemen. I think that once around the table with the wave will be quite enough, thank you."

• •

Transition" tour leaves from the opposite corner.) We will be especially concerned with that form of eccentric typography known as the Emphatic Inserted Italic—italic letters placed among or alongside roman letters for emphasis or effect.

The first Emphatic Italic we would like to consider can be found on the east side of the avenue near Forty-eighth Street, advertising a long-defunct restaurant:

L
O
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P
S

Why this sign remains, though its tipsy "S" leads now only to a Japanese noodle shop, is one of the unsolved mysteries of Manhattan life. Note, however, how deeply moving this Emphatic Italic is today: how its Deco lines forlornly evoke a whole lost world of Longchamps restaurants and their patrons—the era in the city when solidly middle-class people ate in solidly middle-class restaurants, and yet were secure enough to accept as no more than their due a certain flamboyance and jauntiness of spirit. This is an Emphatic Italic that would be right at home on the Chrysler Building, an "S" made tipsy, perhaps, by William Van Alen himself.

The next Emphatic Italic can be found just off Fifty-fifth Street, in the little row of stores that cower beneath the A.T. & T. Building. And note that as we look through this walkway of shops, as we stand in this odd "public" space (what public?) staring at the I.B.M. Building's enclosed lobby across the way, we are experiencing the canonic New York view of the eighties: a view, through an Arcade, beside an Amenity, of an Atrium. Our specimen can be found within the sign announcing one of the most improbable restaurants in New York:

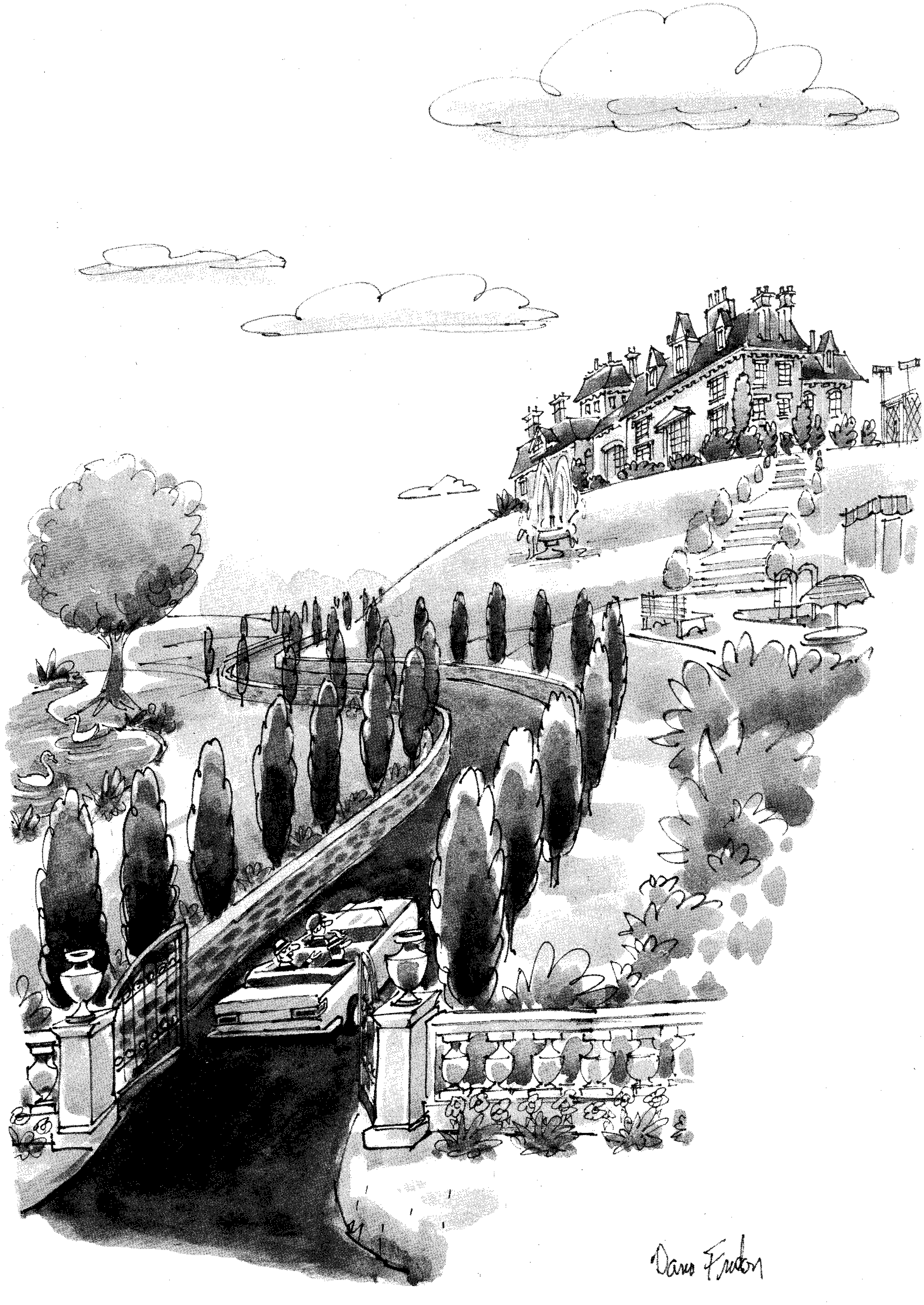
THE CAS*UA*L QUILTED GIRAFFE

While these Emphatic Italics are, ostensibly, meant to evoke ease and relaxed dining, in their particular context they suggest only a contemptuous dare: Have you sprezzatura (and cash) enough to come in, order a six-dollar milkshake and a twenty-five-dollar dish of caviar crêpes, and *do it casually*? These Italics, despite their superficial resemblance to the Longchamps version, are in fact its dissolute heir. They are jaded, exhausted, debauched Emphatic Italics, and the two signs together frame a whole sad chapter in the decline of New York manners.

Now we come to the marquee of a restaurant near Sixty-first Street:

MAX*IMS*

The Art Nouveau lettering of the original sign, in Paris, is, of course, one of the great extravagant statements in the entire italic tradition—a joyous invitation to the Belle Époque. But on Madison Avenue these letters, in their madcap dance, seem like a frantic attempt at distraction rather than an invitation to gaiety. They suggest neither middle-class self-confidence nor ostentatious vulgarity nor bonheur de vivre; they are simply a trademark—the Golden Arches gone Gallic. This concludes our tour.


Dana Fradon

"*It's my one indulgence.*"

STUNNED

As I looked through the telescope, I could hardly believe my eyes: There before me, in the constellation of Virgo, circling a medium-sized star, was a planet. And not just any planet. It had oceans and landmasses and polar ice caps, just like Earth.

And then it hit me: Not only was this planet a lot like Earth—it was *exactly* like Earth! It was an exact twin of our very own planet!

I was stunned. I had to walk away from the telescope. An exact copy of Earth! Were there people there? Were they like us? Did they have the same problems, the same hopes? When I finally summoned the courage to look again, I realized that I had been wrong. It wasn't exactly like Earth. The continents didn't have anywhere near the same shapes as ours, the oceans were different, and many other features were dissimilar. Still, it was a planet, and the first conclusive evidence of such outside our own solar system.

Then it hit me: According to my calculations, the entire planet—oceans, continents, and all—was only a mile in diameter, and rotating at more than twenty times per second. It was a world in miniature, spinning at a phenomenal rate of speed!

I was stunned. I sat back in my chair and rubbed my face in bewildered disbelief. After rechecking my calculations, I realized that I had been off on the size of the planet. It wasn't a miniature planet but was instead about the size of our own Earth. And it wasn't spinning as fast as I had originally calculated. In fact, it was spinning much slower—a little bit slower than our own planet. But that didn't dampen my enthusiasm.

What would I call this new planet? It had large blue oceans, continental landmasses, and polar ice caps, not unlike Earth. Then it hit me: This wasn't an exact duplicate of Earth but was very, very similar to an upside-down Earth!

I had to step back from the telescope and steady myself. I looked again, and it still looked like an upside-down Earth, but not as much as it had before. In fact, the more I looked at it, the clearer it became: My God, it wasn't an upside-down Earth likeness at all but an exact duplicate of Earth! I had been right in the first place!

I was stunned. But then I was struck by a thought that was even more devastating: What if it wasn't an exact copy of us but instead we were an exact copy of *it*? The possibilities were fantastic! What were we like, I wondered. Were we warlike? Did we look like humans?

So it was with great disappointment that I realized I had been aiming the telescope at a picture of Earth on the wall. I had been right after all: It *was* a duplicate of Earth. And yet it wasn't a planet. I sat back in my chair, stunned.

When I finally recovered, I began to scan the nighttime skies. What would I find? The possibilities were enormous—everything from an exact duplicate of Earth to a planet that, if you blurred your vision, might look quite similar to our own.

Then I saw it: If that wasn't a hologram of Earth, I don't know what was. But who could be projecting such a hologram? Were they like us? Did they have the same hopes and dreams and hologram projectors? Just as I was being stunned by all of this, I heard a voice: "Wake up, wake up!"

I woke up, and then it hit me: It had all been a dream. I had fallen asleep at the telescope. Then I went back to sleep for about three hours, and this time I didn't dream at all. But I woke up again, and I realized that the next-to-last nap had all been a dream. I was stunned.

"Hey, Bob," I said. "You wouldn't believe the dream I had two naps ago. I dreamed I discovered a planet that was just like our planet, Earth."

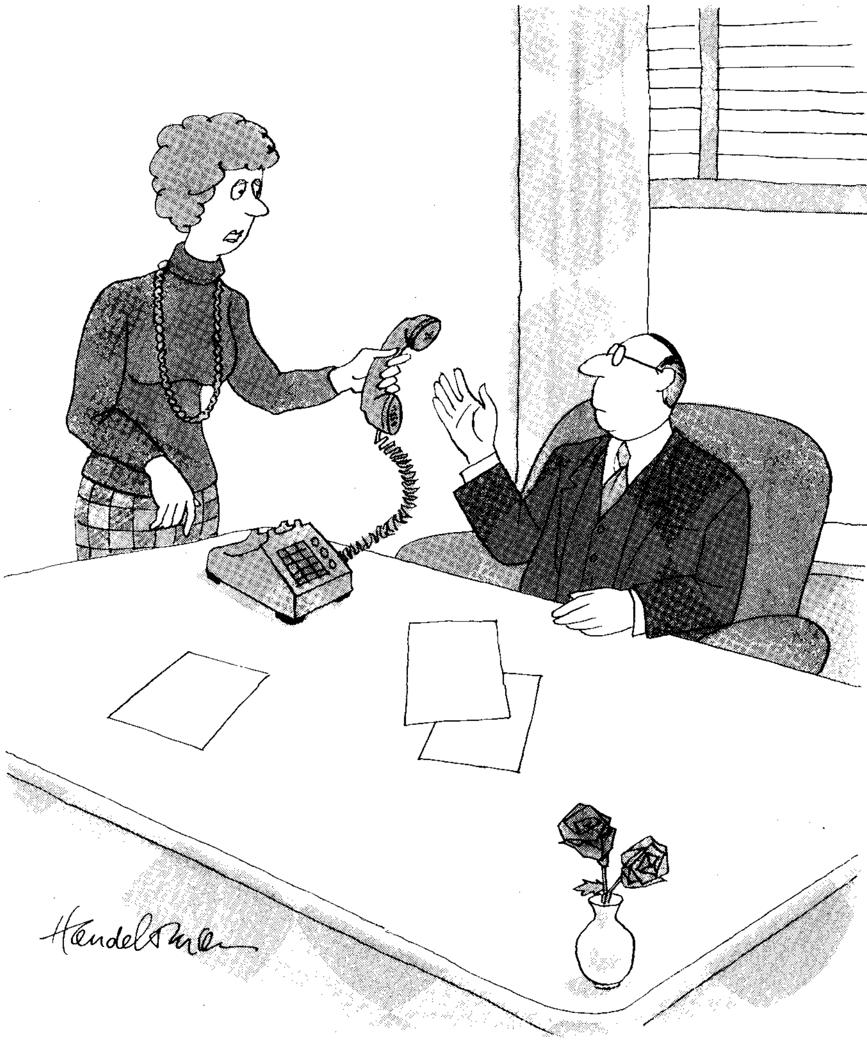
"Earth?" said Bob. "Our planet isn't called Earth. It's called Megatron."

I was stunned. What in the name of a supreme being exactly like God was going on here?

"No, wait—I was thinking of another planet," Bob said. "This *is* Earth."

Eagerly, I turned the telescope toward the sky. What new marvels were awaiting me up there, I wondered.

—Jack Handey



"Your wife feels that your cat needs to hear an authoritative male voice."

EPITAPH

WHEN first I met you I thought it too good to be true. I was incredulous when I found that you, too, were smitten. You would ring me up and ask what I was wearing. You were espoused to satin and to velvet. Other times you would ring up and put the phone down, just to hear my voice. You probably thought it was a mere lark. One does think that, as a precaution. But you were lost and you knew it.

It was on a Greek island that I began to have some premonition of your slipping away from me. It was *there I felt most permeated by you*, even though you were absent. I hid. If people called, or threatened to call, I locked the door that led to the garden, and hence the house, and I lay on one of the straw mats and imagined I was holding you, hour after hour, cradling you, conversing, subject to the most eerie intimacy, as if you had come to rest in the roost of my mind, like a hen at night folded up in its own feathers. There were boats in the harbor, boats festooned with fairy lights and furled with flowers; there were dawns, blistering heat, golden evenings, a medley of stars, yet through them all I lay and basked and rocked back and forth to both the absence and the certainty of you.

When I returned to London, it was the ice zones. You looked so self-contained; like a cat, but with quick, close-to-flinching blue eyes that reminded me of aluminum before it is exposed to the weather. While I had been in Greece, you had been with your family in Arizona. You were going to be travelling, you said, first to one place, then another. You had never before discussed your travels. As you sat in my airy room, I asked myself a few predictably base questions. Even as you were making idle conversation about the low humidity in Arizona or the horse riding that had so relaxed you, I was imagining a little scenario. Perhaps on one of those languid evening rides you saw the woman you were married to in a new light, a little ahead of you on her horse, sauntering, in a dun corduroy outfit, her haunches a representation of peace and maternity. You saw her and you were suddenly filled with a rekindling of your original love. Suddenly our love seemed too hectic, too feverish. I imagined that you gave yourself a bit of a talking-to, early one morning, by a canyon, and that maybe a friend was with you, a male friend, telling you to count your blessings, be thankful for what you had. A blast of sobriety took hold of you and God only knows how many resolutions you made. You had turned the corner. Life was going to be simple, wholesome. I laughed, and finding me laughing you cheered up somewhat, believing that I was not going to put my clutches on you. We kissed and embraced and so forth. Upon leaving, you had the audacity to warn me to be good.

When you left, I marched and marched about my room, uncontainable. I thought of a paddock from my childhood, a rectangular paddock with a stone wall around it. Some of the stones had been capsized, because horses were put in there for their daily bout of air—young wild unruly horses that would tramp and tramp, running from one corner to another, berserk, whinnying. This little paddock merely gave them the longing and the incentive to break loose, to get to the larger fields beyond. I saw the paddock and even the odd bit of flaking mortar that was put there to try to weld the loose stones together. I saw the hawthorn in blossom, pink and white lozenges on the spiky black branches. My own room, with its Prussian-blue walls, was like a tomb—a tomb that I wanted to break out of, except that I did not know how.

AFTER that day, I don't know when I next saw you. It was months and months. You called on me, but you were curt, condescending. You had sprained your back and rather waspishly referred to swinging from chandeliers. I knew that a few bitter hours had possessed you, because you looked racked. You were like those rich city cousins who come to the country one day a year and ask the locals so-called solicitous questions but are already tapping their watches to make sure not to miss the last train. Yet you were softening, showing some ardor, complimenting me. I must have responded too willingly, because all of a sudden you stepped back and announced that we would not be lovers any longer. You did not rule it out to the end of our days, but rule it out you did for the present and the foreseeable future. I felt an odd stab of pity at the way you could so readily restrain yourself—like a parent chastising a child. As for me, I knew that it was not all over, that another level had been reached, another depth.

I HAD a dream of you. It must have been to do with your promotion, that "poisoned chalice," as you called it, but I could see that you were gleeful about it. You had always felt some of your superiors to be hollow, and had no compunction about saying so. Fearless. On the crest. Unstoppable. You reminded me of a dead relative of mine, a man like you, upright, who ached to be a worldly hero even though his hidden nature was that of a mystic.

In the dream you are going to be performing in a play and, as always, you are surrounded. It is in a quadrangle, and I am watching blind girls being led by a bigger blind girl. I have a word with her and she tells me about the play, and adds that she has put my name down to play one of the ghosts. Is it "Hamlet," I wonder. I say to myself that inevitably I will be there as a ghost. Then you all file in, you and your entourage, and I run up to a gallery to hide, so as not to embarrass you. It is both church and theatre. There are banners, torches, and a beautiful threaded-silver hanging lamp to denote the presence of Christ in the tabernacle. Suddenly there is a clamor, an uproar, shouts of men fighting and scuffling, people saying "No, no," and presently a man is being dragged out and laid on the aisle. He is your enemy and has been pasting you. Soon he gets up and goes toward the altar, where you are presiding, and he and you have a confab. Perhaps you are trying to make your peace with him. Your eyes are all that I can see, because of your face being lowered. Your poor eyes, they register such strain, such concern, and they are brown rather than blue.

I RANG you just before Christmas. That time when all sorts of sentiments well up. I had the mistaken idea that you might yield, that you might even call on me, and I saw you, oh what idiocy, carrying a branch of mistletoe. The phone call lasted no more than sixty seconds. You had to go.

Across London, celebrations were rife, and I was included in one or two of them, as, indeed, were you. I went to a party—more correct to say I hobbled to a party—and learned that you were at another party with your family, holding hands, eating mince pie, singing carols. I was the unlucky recipient of this information because one of the guests, an unctuous and meddlesome man, had just come from that party and told all and sundry that you were a lot more agreeable than he had imagined. You have, of course, the reputation of being ruthless and possessed of a vaulting ambition.

Late that night, very late, sodden with wine and grief, I looked through a telephone directory for your home number and was dialling it when I happened to be saved by my son, returning from yet another party. Although he did not mention that I was doing something for which I would be ashamed, he said it by coming stealthily into the room and standing there and making some little conversation about a Christmas Eve when we took a holiday sleigh ride in the snow and sang and asked riddles and were regaled by starry air and the crispness of the dry snow smarting under the runners of the sleigh. Christmases are buggers.

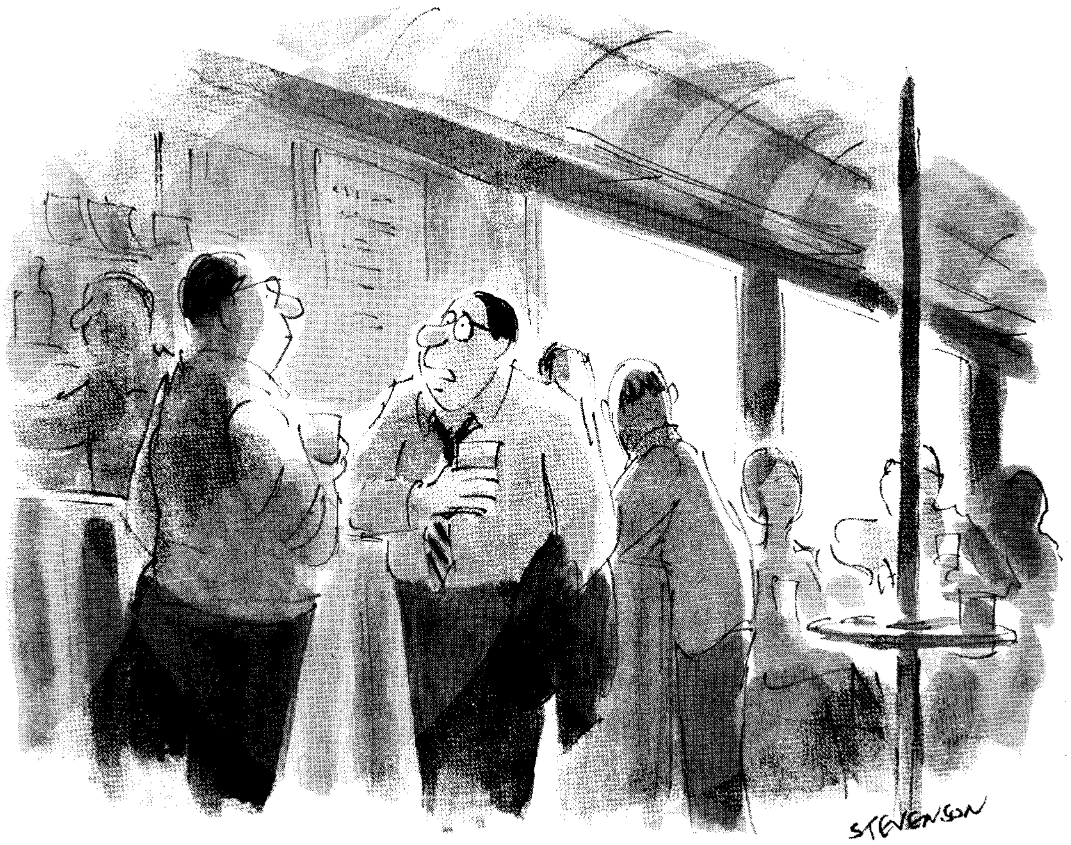
I remember another Christmas altogether, when you and I talked on the telephone and you mentioned that your children were so excited with the prospect of presents and overseas visitors that you had to give them aspirin.

"We had to give them aspirin," you said. "We." I honestly thought that, with your knowledge and your training, you could have come up with something more effective. Anyhow, the night I dialled half of your number was one of those nights that one gets through without knowing how. I call them dead nights, since there is no memory whatsoever of undressing or getting into bed, or drinking from a carafe of water, or dreaming, or howling, or anything.

On Boxing Day, my son drove me a hundred miles to a clairvoyant in Gloucestershire. There was a blinding snowstorm, and encased in his little black sports car I felt—indeed, welcomed the notion—that we might skitter off the road. It was not that I wanted us dead but, rather, I wanted to be taken to another realm. Anyhow, we were lucky, because whenever we skittered we were saved by a grass bank or a gate or a demesne wall. Each time we escaped disaster we ate a boiled sweet as a sort of celebration. The plan was that while I saw this woman who was somehow going to pull out my pain as deftly as the midwife lifts out the slippery child, my son was going to drive in search of some beauties whom he knew, and afterward he would fetch me to their home and we would have tea and plum cake and cinnamon toast. Comfort. Bliss. Three daughters he knew, and each had something particular and engaging about her. One worked as a florist; one bought and sold Oriental carpets and was a wanderer; one had an infectious laugh that was sometimes like a jennet's and sometimes like a nanny goat's.

"We might even stay the night," he said, having a twofold thought—one the pleasure of such an event and the other the glaring fact that we were taking our lives in our hands by being out at all. There was a certain bravura in the way he went with the skids, allowing the car, like a willful animal, to pursue its own course and then patting the steering wheel when things settled down again. Madness. Madness.

The clairvoyant told me that you would have been scornful of my childish nature. By saying "would have" she already put you in the past tense, a goner. She told me incidental things—something about a maypole, a bridesmaid's bouquet, and the name of an



"I can't think of anything I have no problem with."

• •

English town where I had never set foot. As it happened, the beauties were unable to receive us, having a house chockablock with friends and cousins from all over the country; even the nursery was full up. We had tea in the hotel in the market square. The lounge, as they called it, was quite crowded. Families with their relatives; some of them in wheelchairs, others quite listless. There was a huge oil painting on the wall depicting hunters togged in brown coats, their dogs beside them. I was able to stare at a pointer with long liver-colored ears and two retrievers who by their gums and gnashed teeth showed their wild relish. The pointer had a cruel gaze in his eye. The feathered birds scattered about were like the thoughts within my head.

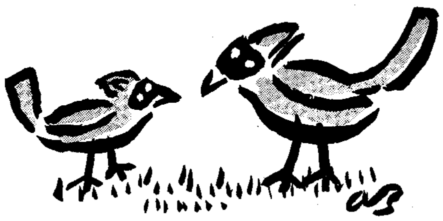
THAT Christmas passed, and the next, and the next, and so on, for I don't know how many years. Someone told me that he saw you at a Midnight Mass in the country looking very handsome, whereas you yourself had told me you were going to the Canaries with your family to get some sun. One doesn't know whom to believe. It got to be that any mention of you sent me dashing to other latitudes.

I went to Rumania to a spa that was also a hotel. Small bedrooms, each with a concrete terrace, adjoined other bedrooms and other terraces, where at the weekends Rumanians drowned their sullenness by drinking well into the night. Not a yodel or a ballad or even a refrain. On Sunday, lumpen women sitting in the lobby looking out at a few low rosebushes. A young girl asked me if I would give her my walking shoes and was piqued to learn that I would not. She kept pestering me. Another young girl asked me to buy her a bottle of whiskey. It was for the doctor who had delivered her baby.

Starvation inside and out. I had such a disgust toward the food—minced meat of some kind, with cabbage and scarcely boiled eggs—and this, mark you, was hotel fare. God only knows what they ate in their own kitchens.

Not a single smile except on a poster, and then it was fairly unconvincing—a buxom woman in a bolero with more a crease than a smile. One evening there was a Gypsy orchestra in the dining room, and as each Gypsy came and sawed Strauss from his violin he whispered a request for a cigarette or a drink. Their wives had stationed themselves at the end of the dining room, fearing perhaps that their men would be wooed by some foreign nymphomaniac.

Each morning I had an injection which was supposed to rejuvenate me. Yes, I had you in mind when I went there. The rest of the day one was left to one's own devices. I would walk through the grounds, past a tennis court to a little allotment, where I was lured by the sight of a few vegetables and one small clump of white-and-lilac phlox that had the most startling effect, like flowers just landed from the moon. There was a woman working there, tending the vegetables, but she always dashed into her little hut when I appeared, determined to avoid me. She had in all about a kilo of tomatoes that were changing from green to red, little bursts of edible amber. She also had a few zucchini lying limply on their stalks, and several ridges of potatoes. The cabbages had been cut off;



VISITING EMILY DICKINSON

We stood in the cupola for a while,
JT, Joe Langland, and I,
And then they left and I sat
Where she'd sat, and looked through the oak tree toward the hat factory
And down to the river, the railroad

Still there, the streets where the caissons growled
with their blue meat
Still there, and Austin and Sue's still there
Next door on the other side.
And the train station at the top of the hill.
And I sat there and I sat there

A decade or so ago
One afternoon toward the end of winter, the oak tree
Floating its ganglia like a dark cloud
outside the window.
Or like a medusa hung up to dry.

And nothing came up through my feet like electric fire.
And no one appeared in a white dress
with white flowers
Clutched in her white, tiny hands:
No voice from nowhere said anything
about living and dying in 1862.

But I liked it there. I liked
The way sunlight lay like a shirtwaist over the window seat.
I liked the view down to the garden.
I liked the boxwood and evergreens
And the wrenlike, sherry-eyed figure

I kept thinking I saw there
as the skies started to blossom
And a noiseless noise began to come from the orchard—
And I sat very still, and listened hard
And thought I heard it again.
And then there was nothing, nothing at all,

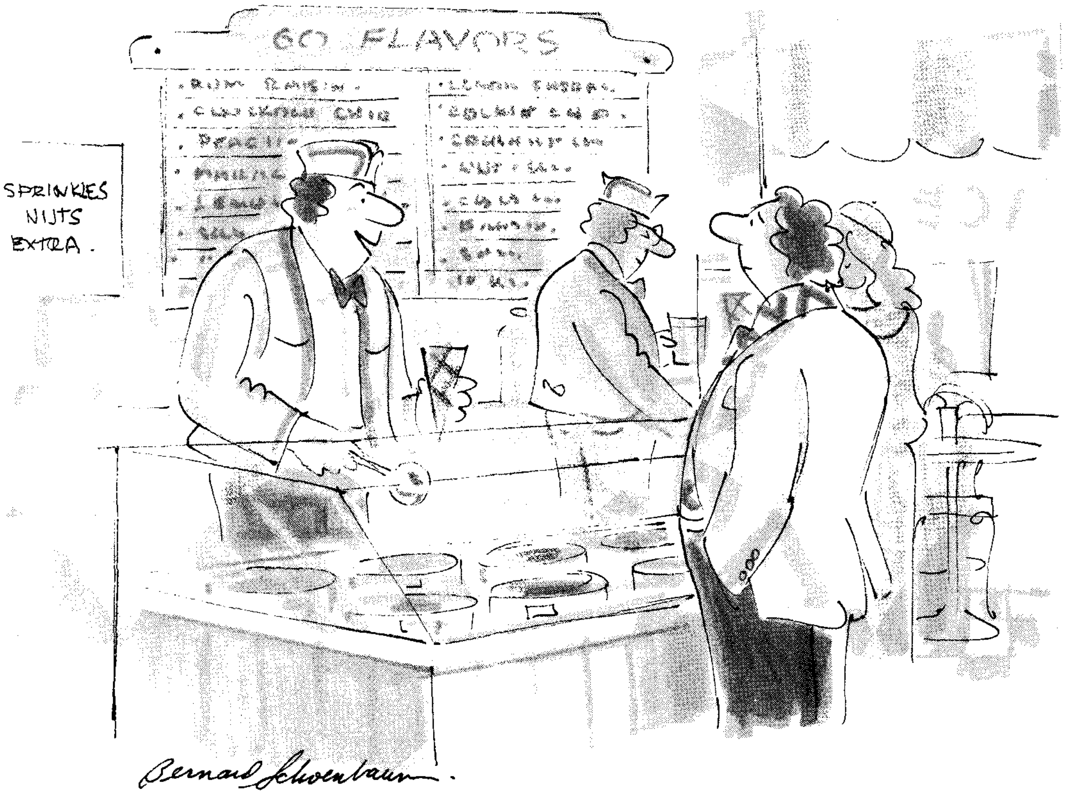
The slick bodice of sunlight
smoothed out on the floorboards,
The crystal I'd turned inside of
Dissembling to shine and a glaze somewhere near the windowpanes,
Voices starting to drift up from downstairs,
somebody calling my name . . .

—CHARLES WRIGHT

• •

only the stumps were left. Alongside, there were other little allotments, and on Sundays their owners would come and sit between their bits of vegetation and have a sort of picnic. I don't know why, but I was drawn back there day after day.

On my last day but one, when I went there I offered the woman my blue folding umbrella. She looked at me through her thick-lensed glasses as if I were mad and then ran into her little hut and pushed the door to—a wooden door, the wood the color of a donkey. I did something quite silly; I opened the umbrella and put it inside the fence on the cindered path. A picture of absurdity—a bright-blue umbrella with little golliwogs on its perimeter.



"Plain or enhanced?"

• •

THERE are those who either wittingly or unwittingly try to make me forget you, scrap you. For instance, at lunch yesterday a friend went to great lengths to describe a painting which she felt I ought to see. It depicted a woman, probably a personable woman, sitting and waiting for someone, while at the margin of the painting stands a man, a suitor, whom she cannot or does not notice. My friend tried to tell me in all good faith how I was wasting my life by waiting. We were in a restaurant; she and her husband were visiting London and had invited a few friends for lunch. She said that when she married him she did it only as a stopgap, until Mr. Right came along. Now she loved him as if he were Mr. Right, which he was. She was wearing pearls and knobbled pearl earrings and she had gray-blue eyes. A pearled light issued from her, and it was like looking into one of those paperweights that are filled with falling snow.

She was trying to jolt me. She pointed to the surroundings—the quilted walls, the stained-glass windows, the mélange of people—and she said, "Look, they're out there, lots of them. Just grab one of them while there's still time." I looked. There were all kinds of people—young families, lovers, not so young women with hats and sultry makeup, and Oriental waiters trying in vain to answer the several demands of the hungry lunchtime throngs. All I could say to her was that if I had to wait for you, which I had, then wait I would.

"Bullshit," she said, but in a friendly way.

She tried to buoy me up by suggesting ways we could make money—the jewelry business, for instance, or a wine bar. That was another thing. I had been improvident in waiting for you, buying fal-lals and all that, even buying a watercolor that I thought you would like. A doorway in Venice suspended above the canal.

"I want you to be happy," she said. Her husband ate quickly and then she wanted him to eat the remainder of her lunch. He refused. She kept begging him and proffering forkfuls of mashed Dover sole.

"Please," he said, and blushed like an altar boy. She kept insisting. I thought he was going to leave.

You see, everyone is holding on. Just. If their skins were peeled off, or their chest bones opened, they would literally burst apart.

OF course I heeded what the woman in the restaurant had said. I began to ask myself why I waited. I thought that maybe it was something to do with my ancestors, one female ancestor in particular, some kind of expiation toward her. Are you like that? You once mentioned to me that you admired some Turkish warrior who achieved renown before he was thirty, but that was when you were young, bombastic.

She was a Bridget. An aunt. In my supplication I'm a bit like her. She wore knitted things, even knitted stockings, and I think she possessed one Sunday coat throughout her whole life. She was a widow at thirty, her husband having been shot by the Black and Tans. To make matters worse, her husband was partly on the side of the foe, since he worked for the constabulary and was something of a scab. Things get very twisted in this world, don't they; nothing is clear-cut. There he was blown to bits by the foe and yet not a hero, not a man for whom a ballad would be made up, or whose tragic fate would be an inspiration for other young men. Bitter. Bitter. She didn't have a little row of medals on a cloth tab to show to her son, or a letter from a dignitary to put in a frame. Anyhow, she carried on, saved the hay, fed the suckling calves, milked, churned, and was even so good-tempered as to make beautiful patterns out of the butter and to adorn the surfaces with little peaks, a tour de force. Each night, after reciting the rosary, she spoke tenderly—nay, erotically—to her dead husband. She cared for her son, brushed the nap of his fawn coat to make it smooth again, saved the leather buttons that fell off a sleeve for a future emergency, made jam, plum and greengage, the latter being a great novelty.

Food was her little indulgence, her sin. Each night, after the rosary and the paeans to her beloved, she made hot milk, to which she added sugar, and then she dunked bits of loaf bread in the milk and sucked and sucked as if she were sucking the bread of life. When she retired to bed she carried her china chamber pot up the stairs, and went to sleep and dreamed no doubt of things bad and good: her kine, the pet names she had given them, and the one tree of greengages—the green, she once envisaged, like globes clinging to an oval stone.

Other women complained of "roastings in the head" or pulled down their bloomers on the chapel road, but not her; she kept toiling and moiling, she crooned, she forked the steaming manure onto the heap and with buckets of rainwater washed out the mangers. When her son went to college, she wept, wrote the weekly letter, and at Halloween sent a parcel containing apples, nuts, and her specialty, porter cake. She fretted over how to pay the fees and paid them somehow, in fits and starts. Then catastrophe struck. Her animals contracted foot-and-mouth disease and died, their legs buckling under them, slobber oozing from their mouths. Neighbors rallied with jugs of milk and a flitch of pork or bacon when they killed a pig, but to her what was worst of all was the deserted farmyard—not even a goose or a little pullet to keep her company, nothing but empty outbuildings, a hay shed gapingly empty, a dairy smelling of disinfectant, the churn idle, a silence that grated on her second by second.

But joy comes to all. Joy came to her when years later her son decided to come home from England and bring back his bride. It was as if she herself were embarking on marriage as she prepared for the great event. She made a straw hat and decked it with clusters of artificial violets, dusted over with a haze of white, making them look like real violets that had just had their first coat of frost. God knows where she got them. At the wedding she drank sherry and in a high quavering soprano voice sang "My Cottage Home by Lough Sheelin's Side." Not the most suitable song for a joyous occasion—a dirge, really—but the guests, or at least some of them, were as happy to cry as to laugh. They swallowed their tears with the same relish as the thin beef-tea soup. It was not a Type A breakfast; more a Type D or E.

Her son's bride—an Emily, no less—proved to be moody, and insisted that she and her husband sit in the parlor alone after supper while Mother-in-Law commanded the kitchen. A dead husband had been a different matter. Vaults do not open. Graves do not burst their seams of clay and yield up a moving hand or a shinbone or even a gaze. To have a son, a darling son, on the other side of the varnished door, in her very own abode, and not be able to speak to him or hand him a mug of tea or consult him about next day's weather was a cross that she felt she could not bear.

Eventually she would crawl up to bed and cry, through the bolster into the very ticking. More than once in the night she would get up and hold the chamber pot aslant so in the next room they would not be mindful of her indiscretion, because to her all bodily functions were an indiscretion. She heard raised voices most nights from that next room, and their unhappiness hurt her far more than their happiness could ever have. She thought that maybe she should intervene, and occasionally she murmured about the suitability of her own death, but had to admit to herself that she was not ready for it. Devout she may have been and stainless in soul, but she feared death. Who doesn't? Don't I? Don't you?

So the poor woman listened night after night to the voices of the newlyweds and pondered. Sometimes she heard a door slam as if one or the other was on the point of leaving, and sometimes she heard silence, the sullen silence of two people awake but too proud to solicit forgiveness. Then again she heard tender voices, the meshing of limbs, the mew of the woman and the savage yodel of the man who in daylight was her mild son.

Self-Portrait

One rainy morning her son asked her if he could talk to her and he gestured to the front door.

"Mother of Jesus, he is going to evict me," she said to herself as she followed, trying to gauge from the gait of his long spattered trenchcoat what his mood was. The hem of his coat was hanging, and she felt ashamed that she had not stitched it. They went to the hay shed, to be out of the rain, and as he leaned against the haystack he rolled a cigarette and said nothing. No melting words about parting being such sweet sorrow.

"Mother," he said, and it was the very same as if her own dead mother had called her name and were about to rebuke her for having stolen a bun or only half milked a cow.

"Mother," he said again.

"John," she said, the tears welling up. Where would she go? She would have to live in a potato pit or take a room with some lonely neighbor.

"Emily's upset," he said.

"Oh," she said, as if that were something that just could not be countenanced. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Leaping to this friendly cue, he proceeded to tell her how insecure Emily felt, how banished, how it was no joke for Emily to leave Birmingham and bury herself in a mountainous swamp, in a bog. Worst of all, Emily felt herself to be an interloper, a mere lodger in the house where she ought to be mistress. Much more was said concerning Emily's early life, her difficult boozing father, the sudden death by drowning of one of Emily's sisters.

She had already in her mind given them the whole place, lock, stock, and barrel, and that night, when they had a friendly drink around the blazing fire, it was she who was the interloper in her own home. Though they drank each other's health with homemade elder wine, she must have had some intimation that the next equinox she would be going down the road carrying a bag, two baskets, and an oil lamp.

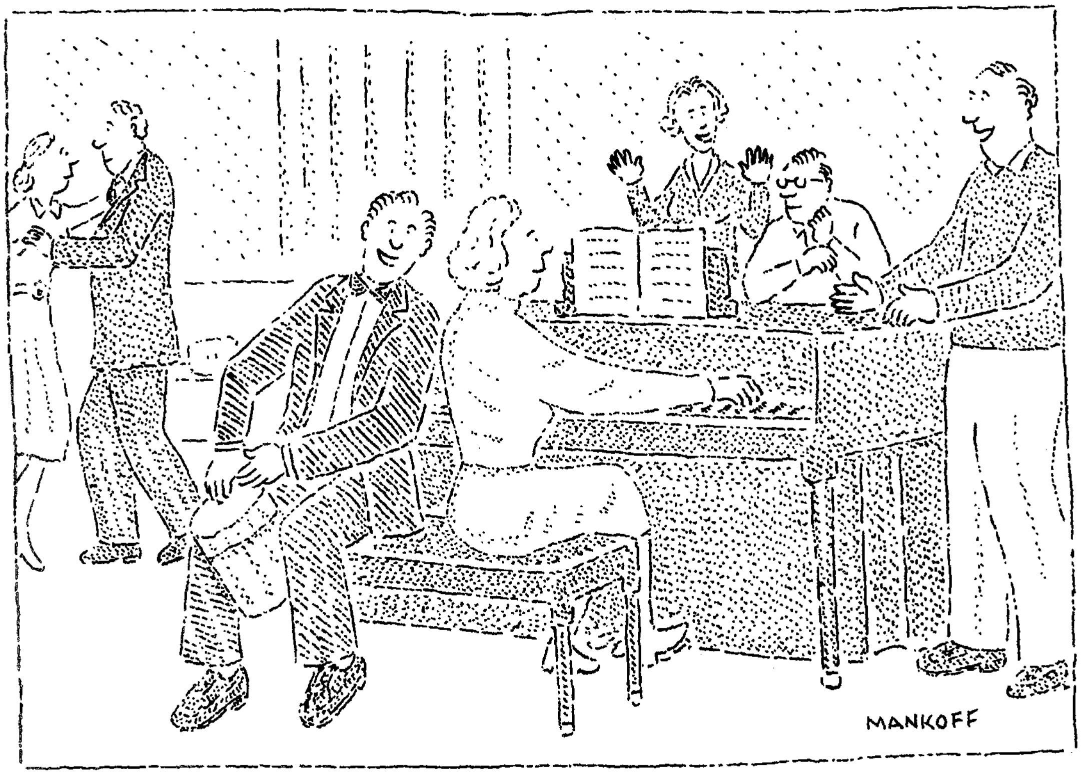
She took lodgings in a house in a village nine miles away—a house with mildewed walls, so damp it was like a lime kiln; her fingers became like crooks, ludicrous prongs doubled over in prayer and still more prayer, as if her suffering were going to be efficacious, which it was not.

THERE came a day—don't ask me when—that you returned. Quite by surprise. You were a bit wound up. You had had an argument with the powers that be over your position and you were full of combat. You ate all before you. Olives, salami, taramasalata. The fact that you were not eating bread gave you reason to suppose that you could eat everything else to excess.

"Always more," you said ruefully, like a little boy, as you dunked a soupspoon of taramasalata onto a blade of chicory, then five or six more disks of Hungarian salami. It was sliced very thin, the specks of fat in it like crushed seed pearl. Then it was time to nestle, to come together. We had such a way with one another, so tender, like icicles melting. But time had run out, your morning's argument had kept you longer than you meant, and now you were due back at work, bells were summoning you, inner bells and outer ones. I was sitting, as it happened, on the top step of the staircase, on that short piece that joined two landings. It was high summer. We had a habit of moving about a lot, some sort of ruse so as not to oppress one another. You came out in your light-blue summer suit and you smiled and you said, "Do you want me to take you on the stairs?"

"Yes," I said, simulating a brazenness, and you thought about it and decided that the time was too short and announced that you would come back on the morrow. I stayed in the same place, on the top step of that short flight of stairs, facing a frosted window that had a border of red stained glass, in which there were little birds and crescents, like jellies inside two spheres of liquid red. You never allowed me to see you out, lest we be spotted, lest you be compromised. Sometimes it rankled and sometimes it didn't.

I raised the window up until the bottom half was level with the top, and through the lower space I looked out at summer, the bronzed sun-laden breathless air, the plane tree with both its foliage and its bobbins. I imagined biting on one of them, cracking the shell to get to the inner flesh, to get to the source, breaking my eyeteeth. Yes, there are times when we are not that far from the jungle. To calm myself I thought of something beautiful, virginal, and it was the white icing on a Christmas cake, a vast castellation, and I thought of the mother who fashioned it with her damp spatula, working on it to create valleys, peaks, a pinnacle to be gazed at, so beautiful that it cried out not to be eaten, and I wished that I had known you then. Ah yes, that was the rub of it—that we were children together from the be-



Fun (circa 1955)

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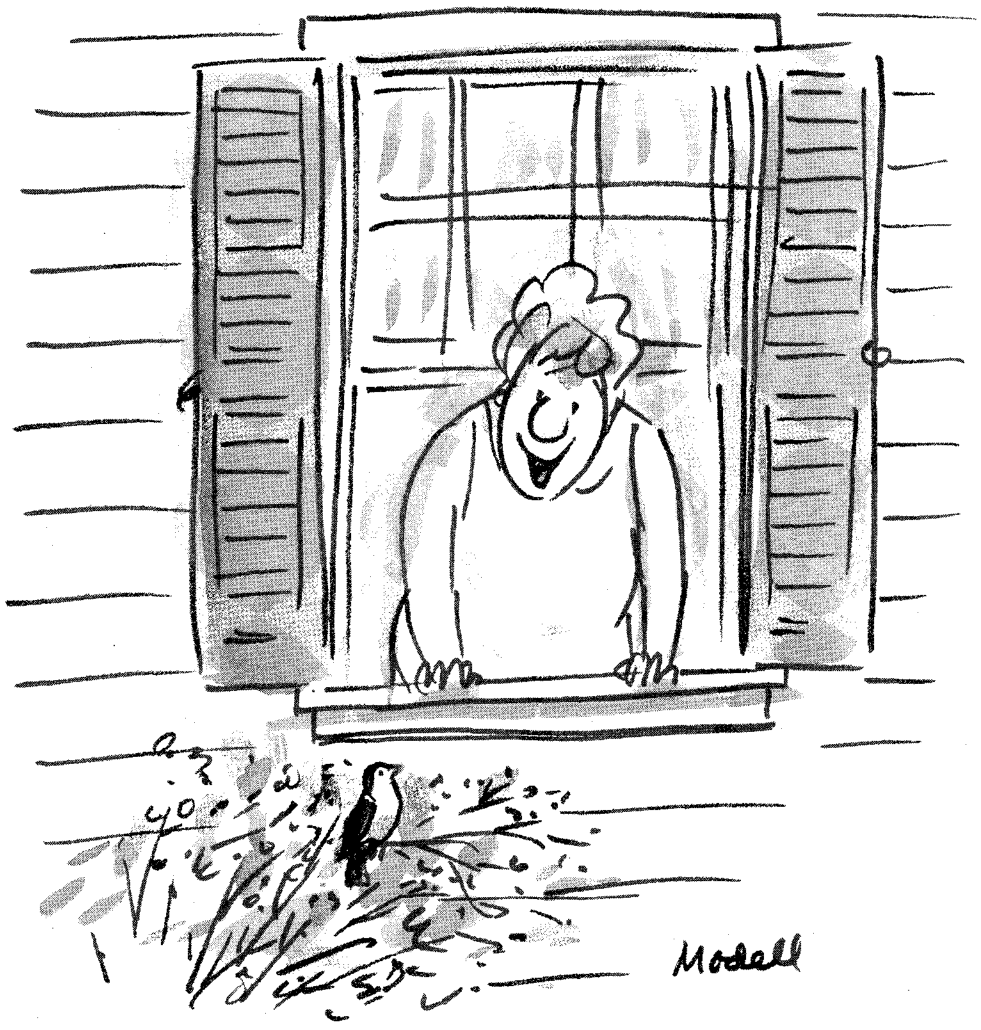
ginning, the very beginning, and for all eternity.

You had left your tie. It sprawled over the back of the chair, resting on my white cardigan, two uneven tongues of blue spattered with black spots, and I looked at it with such conviction, as if you had just gone upstairs and were soon to come down again, discussing what we might do for dinner. I heard you. I did. I heard your footsteps. I thought maybe you had hidden or come in through the skylight, the way some lovers do to surprise the beloved. It was as bad as that.

DO you recall the time I met you on a train by chance about a year later? You were with your children. You all ate heartily; you ate fried eggs and bacon and chips and washed it all down with plastic cups of coffee. Then you used the little plastic stirrer to pick your teeth as you pointed knowingly to a big house on a hill or a motorbike track or an oncoming train. Naturally we would not be staying together when we got to the destination, so I asked if there was a walk, a bracing walk where I could get rid of the city cobwebs. You warmed to this. You drew me a little picture. You said I was to take the ferry; I was to cross over to the next county, and on arrival I would come upon a beautiful domain which was open to the public. Your children sensed how interested in me you were because of your drawing the picture, because of your saying "I'd be interested to know how you get on."

I took the ferry next day. It was pouring with rain and there was a lashing wind. When I landed there was a tea shop cum antique shop, and I saw a little something that I yearned to give you. It was a ship within a bottle—an ivory ship encased in this bottle that seemed to have been rinsed in Reckitt's blue. The shop was closed.



"Hello, and what kind of birdie are you?"

I went up the garden path through the turnstiles and into the public gardens along with all the other tourists. The rain had ceased, but it was shivering cold. The daffodils were out, two kinds—the very yellow ones that look like butter and the whitish ones like milk. Their petals were pitiful. Children were running in all directions, imagining this was their private garden, and grownups would stop in front of something to voice their admiration.

I felt a pang when I came on the house. A big house, majestic in its design. I recall it as being pink, but that may be a misconception. By pink I merely mean warm—a welcome, a glow. I fancied that you were up there waiting to receive me, while in fact I knew that you were elsewhere, with your children. They must have been surprised by your behavior on the train, by your largesse. You threw money at them to go and get more eats. You were liberality itself. Showing both them and me how chivalrous you could be. A knight.

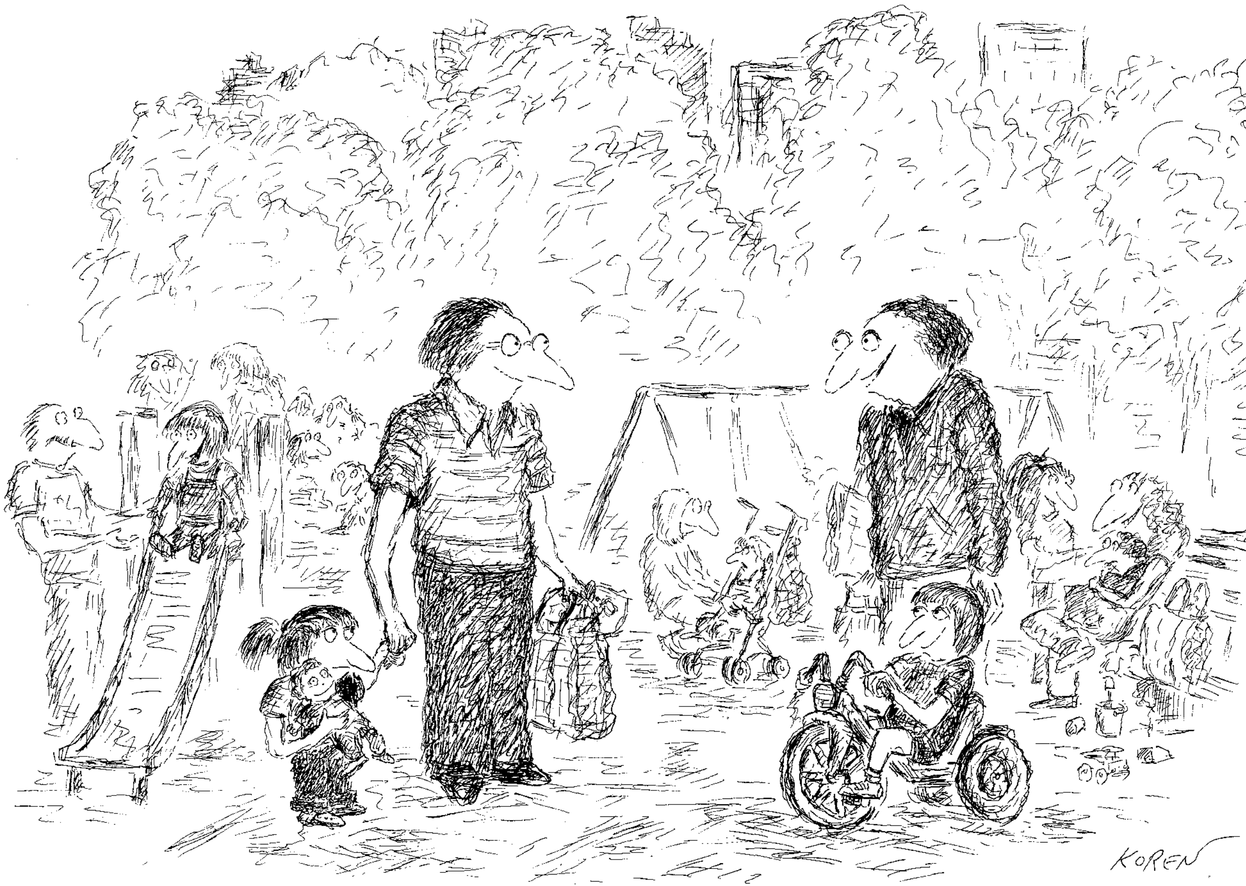
ANOTHER season altogether. Mellow ripeness, et cetera. The chestnuts shiny as an admiral's boots, their undersides a wandering creamy color. It was just coming up to Remembrance Day. I snatched the poppy from the lapel of your tweed coat and looked at it, its crinolined edges and its functional wire stalk, and then I put it on my mantel.

"You will have to get another," I said.

"I'm afraid I still love you," you said almost balefully, as if you were having to say it in front of a whole class.

"In your heart of hearts?" I asked, and you nodded. I don't remember much else. We were sad and utterly understanding, the way people are in such situations. Ours was a small tragedy in comparison with the big ones, the world gone off the rails, righteous chants of madmen, rapine, pillage; ordinary mortals, feeling as insignificant as gnats. When you were leaving, you embraced me and you said, "A lot has been said, a lot has been said." We left it at that.

ATROCIOUS solitudes. Supermarkets on Sunday, each customer with his or her own purchase—a pack of strong brown ale, a twisting vermillion sausage, like a snake, two pork chops under cellophane. I went



"Something you should bear in mind, James. Sam has recently come into a lot of money."

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to get a stamp to send you a valentine. They didn't sell stamps. "Maybe you would have one in the till," I said to the girl.

"I said we don't sell stamps," she said. Pinched. Shrewish. White as an albino. No thought at all for anyone's plight. You wouldn't be taking her for a stroll down by the salley gardens. Do you ever take fancies to girls in shops?

THAT time I met you in a friend's apartment was very odd, very unsettling. I got there before you. I brought big bunches of summer flowers—stock and sweet William, things like that. When I arrived, there was such a smell of cats and cat pee that I shot to the three windows and opened them—so much so that the curtains, not snowy white, mark you, billowed into the room as if it were some theatre or opera house. Yet neither the breeze nor the flowers did anything to abate the horrible pong of cats. I imagined you noticing as you came through the door and thinking what seedy friends I had.

I agreed to meet you there because I had a team of builders refacing the outside of my crumbling house. For months I could not look out of the window without seeing a trouser leg or a face or a spattered overall, and I thought of you having to come there and feel compromised or spied upon. Anyhow I did not risk it. You came to the strange address. For once, you showed a bit of deference; in short, you did not comment on the smell or ask if there was someone in the other room. We talked politely, and then, at one moment, fearing that I was going to get up and go to you, to embrace you or something, you put your hand out and said, "Sit, stay sitting!" As if I would embrace you, not having done so for many a year. Yet when you were leaving we did cling to one another like two dying creatures—dying of what?

Still, I was glad that you were leaving. It is not that one cannot bear the parting; it is really that one cannot bear the meeting, because of so many constraints. I kept trying to form a picture of you in the armchair in which you sat, as a keepsake. You had your legs stretched forward and you were somehow defenseless, like a warrior home from battle who has thrown all his armor at his feet. I could feel my heart going pitapat, pitapat while I was making so-called sensible conversation. I was going away. Far away. I was busy telling you, and myself, what a good thing it was, a golden opportunity. You took down numbers, the various numbers where I would be. It was understood that we might meet in that other country. Might. You were dashing off to buy a wedding present for someone who was going overseas to marry. I suggested a print, a print of Big Ben or the Thames or something pathetic. Meanwhile, I had that picture of you in my mind, my secret Odysseus returned from his wandering, reunited with his wife, his retinue, his dog. We said goodbye, three or four or five times; we clung. To think that it happened as cleanly as that.

—EDNA O'BRIEN

A REPORTER AT LARGE

VEHEMENT FIRE—I

Dave Ball, a Missoula, Montana, senior deputy sheriff and the Sheriff Department's explosive-and-ordnance-disposal specialist, walked through snow two feet deep toward a low-roofed, weather-beaten chicken house located on property known as the Smith Ranch—though, at a hundred and sixty acres or so, it is more properly referred to, by local standards, as a "place." It was an ugly late-winter day, with sleet and snow falling out of the west from dark, gray clouds that draped themselves over the surrounding ridges like thick, badly washed blankets.

The chicken house, a ten-by-twenty-foot building with a bank of south-facing screened glassless windows, stood three hundred yards across sloping pasture from the large log house of Annick Smith, a filmmaker who owns the property, and about twenty yards from a collapsing log cabin, built by her land's original homesteaders during the eighteen-eighties and of great sentimental value to Smith. On a chest-high shelf in the chicken house, amid piles of cedar roof shakes, miscellaneous wood scraps, paint cans, books, cardboard boxes, and a few storm-window frames, was a small, sturdy wooden box marked

ICC 14
High Explosives
DANGER
Du Pont Dynamite
XTRA 40%

The box, and the dynamite inside it, had been sitting around, pretty much out of the way, for a long time. Out of curiosity, Smith had that day telephoned the land's previous owners to pin down the dynamite's history a little more closely. It had been there since 1948.

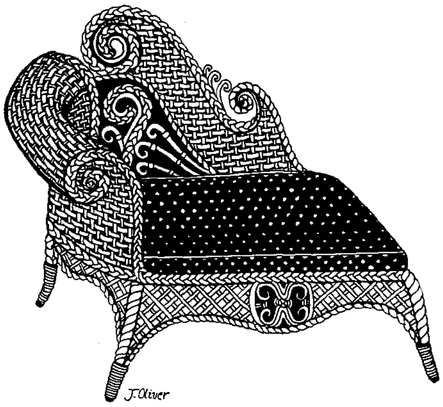
Old dynamite doesn't weaken and die; it gets meaner and meaner. The nitroglycerin succumbs to gravity and percolates through its suspending batter—sweating, or weeping, it's called—and beads on its stiff-paper cylinder casing. Then it slides slowly out of the stick itself, onto the box lining or a shelf; onto the floor, into the ground—turning that box, that plank, that floor, that ground into an explosive as potent as anything fresh from the factory. Animals sometimes find old dynamite and gobble it up; they like the salt of the nitrates, the sweetish nitroglycerin. Rats and birds grab at dynamite to build their nests. Sometimes when they do that they die: the nitroglycerin itself kills them, or their pecking, scratching, gnawing disturbs molecular bonds, and they blow up in a blink.

"That's a handsome box," Ball said as he stepped inside the chicken house. "I'd take it home for a souvenir—if it wasn't soaked in nitro."

A brown stain, so level that it might have been an unfinished paint job, covered the bottom half of the box—the result of decades of nitroglycerin seep. Ball, a slight man of thirty-six with a round, boyish face, dragged a small rabbit hutch toward the shelf, first inspecting the floor, keeping the hutch clear of any nitroglycerin that might have dripped there. He climbed onto the hutch and began an inspection of the box's contents with his flashlight, relaying the results to Smith, Steve Wake (a volunteer member of the county's Search and Rescue Association, who had come to assist), and me. We were standing outside, about twenty feet away.

"There's seepage around the case. There's about twenty-five pounds of dynamite left here. I haven't found any crystals yet. That's good. The crystals—that's hardened nitro—are worse than the seepage. What happens if there are crystals and I try to move the box is that they will crack, tear themselves from the shelf, and they'll blow. The sticks are still sweating. I see a rat's nest behind the box. And a couple of plastic beer cups. It's soaked right through the shelf. Really soaked."

He hopped off the hutch. At the sound of his landing, Smith and I jerked away, almost bumping heads. "It also looks like it's dripped into the concrete on the floor," he reported. "The shelf and the floor, as well as the box, have become saturated—the nitroglycerin is suspended in the wood and concrete. I could detonate it all right here, at once. Or I could treat the box with my nitroglycerin desensitizer, then move it outside and detonate it somewhere, then come back and get rid of the soaked stuff."



"What would happen to the log cabin back there if we got rid of it all at once?" Smith asked. "That's a fragile old building."

"Hard to say," Ball said. "But it will put a pretty good shock on that roof. And it would do a good job on this chicken house."

"I don't want a big pile of junk. Can't you just burn it?"

"The proper method is to explode the substance," Ball said, as if he were reading from a procedures manual.

"But dislodging the box, carrying it outside—isn't that more hazardous than just blowing it up here, where it is?"

Ball, who was doing an excellent job of remaining impassive, looked back at the dynamite case. "Let's just say there would be less hazard to me if I was home watching cartoons. This stuff is dangerous. This is very unstable dynamite. Those beer cups. There have been people in here."

"Most likely," Smith said, with a burst of nervous laughter. Over the years I had known her, the topic of the dynamite had come up several times, sometimes accompanied by serious warnings. No one—not Smith, not I, not any of her friends—really knew how dangerous, if at all, the explosives were. The topic was usually dismissed. "I'm pretty sure that stuff just fades away with time," someone would say, or "If it was that dangerous, they wouldn't be selling it."

She told Ball about her annual Memorial Day party—several dozen guests, lots of beer, lots of small children running everywhere, a softball game with twenty people to a side and a deep-right-field fence that was the chicken house.

Ball shook his head. "It's absolutely ridiculous to have this stuff around kids. Around anyone."

Smith made her decision. While Wake began packing down a fifty-yard trail from the chicken house to a large slash pile just over a little knoll, Ball, Smith, and I walked over to the

Sheriff Department's pickup truck, near Smith's front door. Ball climbed into a baggy bright-yellow anti-static suit made of thin, crinkly plastic. He donned a black motorcycle helmet with a yellow-orange visor and found his small bottle of nitroglycerin desensitizer. Wake returned.

"The snow's a little soft the last ten or fifteen feet before you get to the slash pile," he said. "You better be careful. But I'm a lot heavier than you, Dave—you ought to be all right."

Ball headed for the chicken house. In his huge yellow suit, against the snow, the dark hills, the gray clouds, the black pines, he looked like a large fluorescent egg yolk. He disappeared into the chicken house. With binoculars we could see him—a shadow of muted yellow through the fine screens. Eventually, he emerged, cradling the box of dynamite before him, and made his slow, deliberate way along the path Wake had blazed for him. I found myself holding my breath, the way one might watching someone walk a tightrope or dive from a cliff. I had a perverse notion—a waking nightmare, really. I saw Ball setting the case down, and, as he leaned over, a wood chip or a feather or a piece of straw falling from him onto the nitroglycerin. Would there be a scratch, an extended click, that would be the last sound Dave Ball ever heard?

Then he was coming back toward us, without the box, helmet in hand. He smiled slightly when he reached us. "Twenty-five pounds can get heavy after a while."

"I guess that desensitizer worked."

"It helps some, for a little while."

"What's it made of? It sounds like useful stuff," I said.

"I'd rather not say. If you knew what it was, you might try and use it sometime."

We marched across the expanse of snow and peered tentatively into the case. The dynamite was a jumble of soggy sticks, some broken, some intact. The mushy heap looked like so many large light-brown cigars, all oozing brown sugar and sodden sawdust. As Smith, Wake, and I returned to the pickup, Ball wired the shot with electric detonating caps and a long electrical cord. It was ready to go.

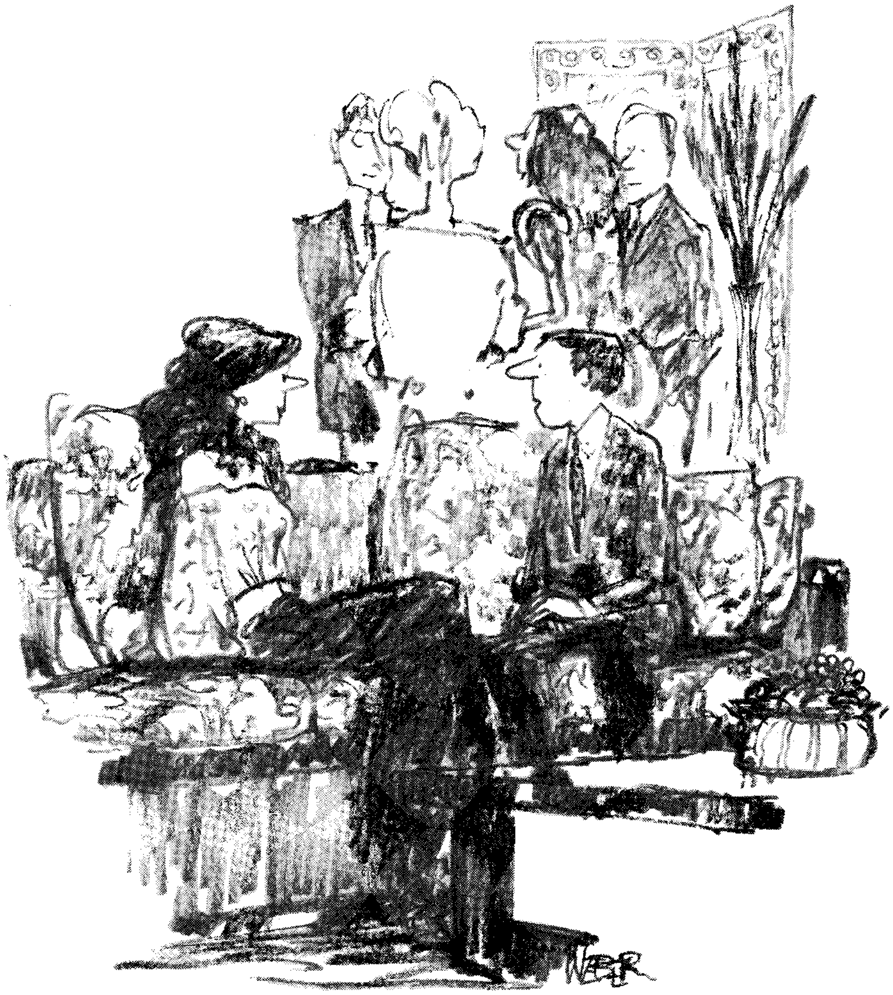
"It's more of a boom than a crack," Ball said. "If it's a big boom, then that shelf and cement floor won't be bad. If it's a small boom, then we still have a lot left to blow with the second shot."

It was a sharp crack, not a boom at all. In a way, it was disappointing—no roiling balls of flame and black smoke, no ground thunder. It was more like a cherry-bomb firecracker raised to a very high power than like anything I'd seen at the movies. The smoke shot straight up, in a delicate, widening plume that towered over the trees. It became richer, yellow-gray, as it descended, thickening and then dispersing on the wind. We went back to the slash pile. It had been about four feet high and eight feet long. Now it was a shallow crater. Chips and wood dust made a pale conic shadow on the snow. Everywhere else, the snow was uneven, lumpy from horses' hooves, but in the soot shadow it was blown smooth, groomed.

The day had turned cold. The snow stopped, and the wind picked up. We waited at the pickup while Ball wired the chicken-house shot. The second explosion—another crack—was not as loud as the first, and instead of a thin tower of smoke there was a cloud of flying wood and debris.

The soaked shelf had disappeared. The bank of screens was ripped and flapping in the wind. The entire roof of the shed, still intact, had been lifted two inches, exposing large nails between the roof itself and its crossbeams. The concrete floor was a web of cracks, and directly under the space where the dynamite had been was a small crater. Two walls had large sections blown out of them, and through the holes we could see a thirty-foot-long field of splintered boards embedded with nails. A half-inch standing pipe that had protruded from the floor was bent into a soft dogleg. A cardboard Sunkist Orange crate was ripped in half; a swallow's nest was hanging from a crossbeam by a single mud-bolted twig; a bicycle frame was bent, the front forks pushed to touching, the rear-wheel rim a gnarled figure eight. The beer cups were gone.

We gathered the nail-studded boards, stashing them inside so the horses wouldn't walk on them, and headed for the house. Ball returned briefly to the chicken house. "I couldn't find the rat's nest," he said. "I



"I operate under the assumption that man is basically good."

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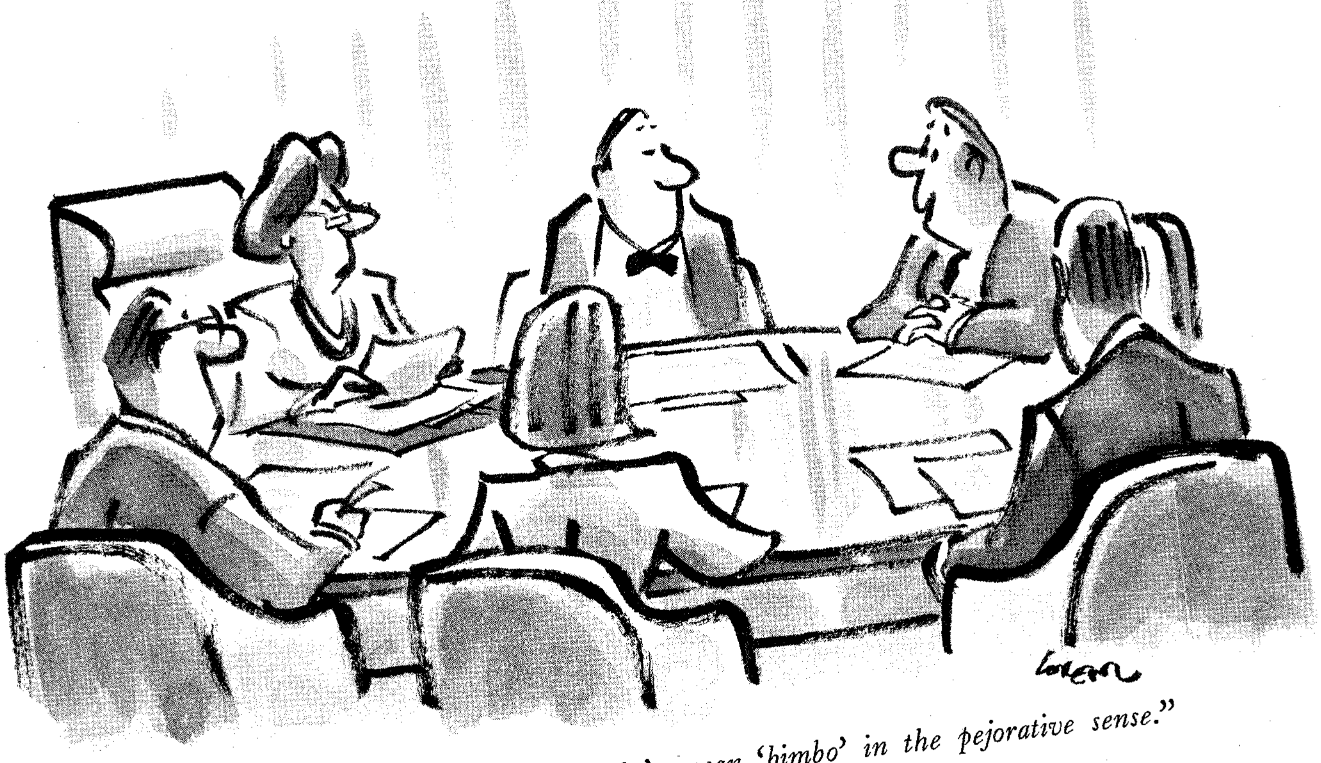

“Sorry, Chief, but of course I didn’t mean ‘bimbo’ in the pejorative sense.”

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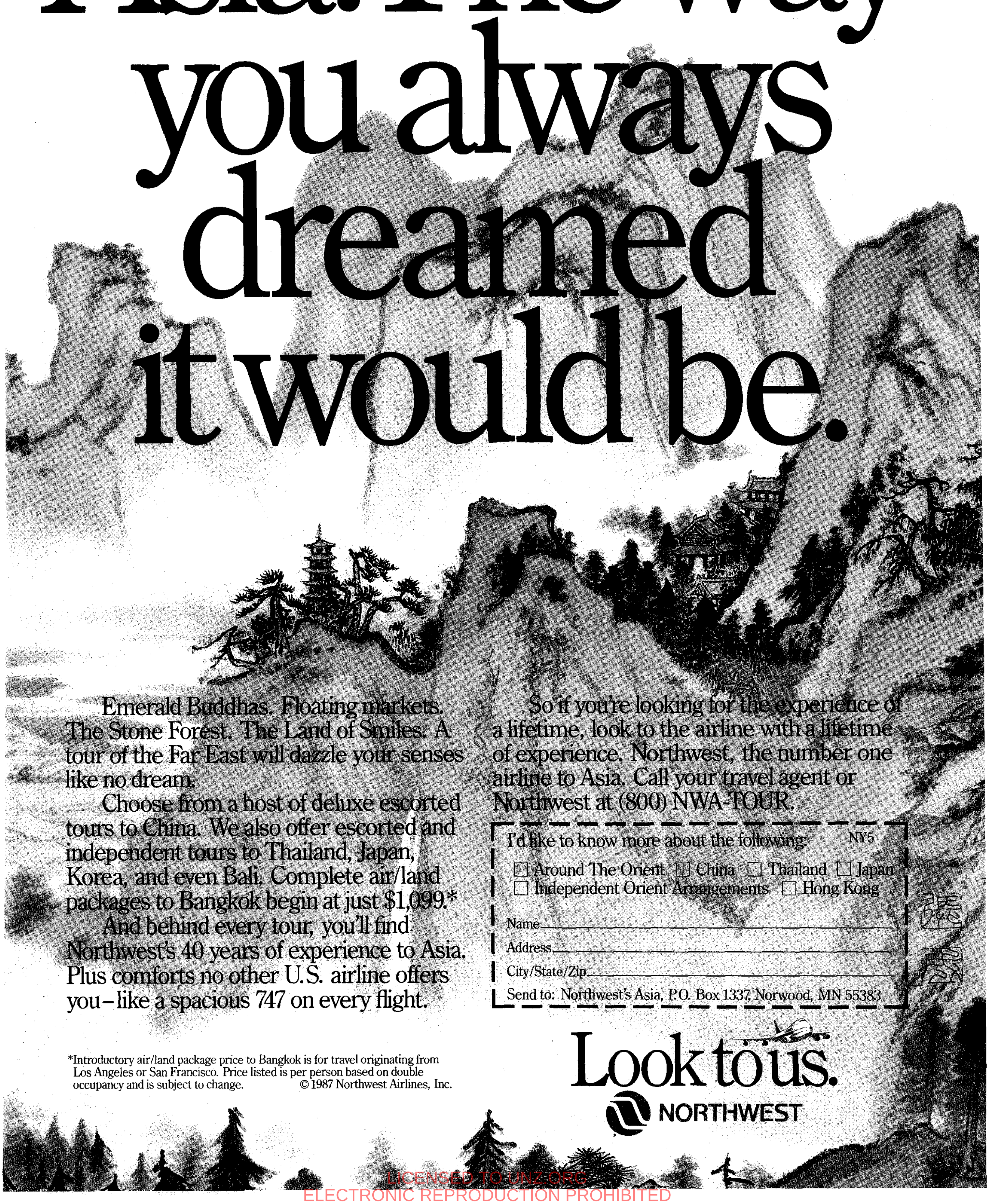
wonder what the rats thought about all that.”

ON April 13, 1888, Alfred Nobel, a Swedish chemist and industrialist who twenty-one years earlier had mixed a capricious, extremely powerful oil called nitroglycerin with kieselguhr, a diatomaceous earth, to create a baton-shaped explosive he called dynamite, woke to read his own obituary in a French newspaper. The notice, inadvertently run in place of the obituary of an older brother, who had died the previous day, described Nobel as a “merchant of death,” whose work with explosives was responsible, to a great extent, for Europe’s accelerating arms race.

Overriding his deep dismay at the editorial error was a sadness unto depression when he realized how the world viewed his life’s work. Nobel would eventually emerge from this melancholy—he referred to the condition, which plagued him all his life, as visits from “the spirits of Niflheim,” the mythological Norse underworld—to bequeath most of his vast fortune toward the granting of annual prizes to those individuals who most advanced the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and “fraternity between nations,” but his attempt to redesign his legacy should not be considered an act of expiation. He saw his most famous invention (he would eventually hold some three hundred and fifty patents) as a creator rather than a destroyer, as a life enhancer rather than a life diminisher, as a beacon of progress rather than an agent of pandemic misery. In fact, very little of Nobel’s wealth came from any military application of his inventions. Although, during his lifetime, many pounds of dynamite had exploded in the vehicles, homes, offices, and faces of perceived enemies, a much greater amount went toward retuning the Industrial Revolution, which had been in some danger of stalling on the chaos of its own progress.

In many ways, dynamite gave the Industrial Revolution its shape—its Jack-and-Mrs.-Sprat excess and impoverishment, its push toward the outlands of America, its simultaneous establishment of monumental engineering works and environmental mutilations—as well as its inexorability. In the age bounded by the end of the Civil War and the closing days of the Second World War, no single engineering tool surpassed the achievement of dynamite, but the last four decades have seen this loud, crude, accessible, proletarian explosive edged toward the sidelines by sleeker, safer, less romantic chemical explosives out in the field, and by infinitely more monstrous explosives in our imaginations. Dynamite, which changed the world by smashing the integrity of rock in a thousand different ways, has slipped into the campy regions of late-night B movies—a spitfire prop thrown by a wide-brimmed buckaroo.

If the late twentieth century is as we know it in large part because of dynamite, we are not especially quick to acknowledge the fact. A promotional pamphlet of the Hercules Powder Company, breathlessly entitled “Dynamite, the New Aladdin’s Lamp” and written by one T. W. Bacchus, includes this passage: “Ask many people to what we largely owe our great progress; they will probably enumerate a number of things: the steam engine, the telegraph, and what not. Few indeed will ever mention dynamite, which is the most important of all.” Bacchus offered that reminder in 1922, before dynamite had begun its slow journey into psychic oblivion. By the nineteen-eighties, like innumerable other basics (long division and string come to mind), it had become downright invisible—which is not to say that it’s obsolete. In 1985, a hundred



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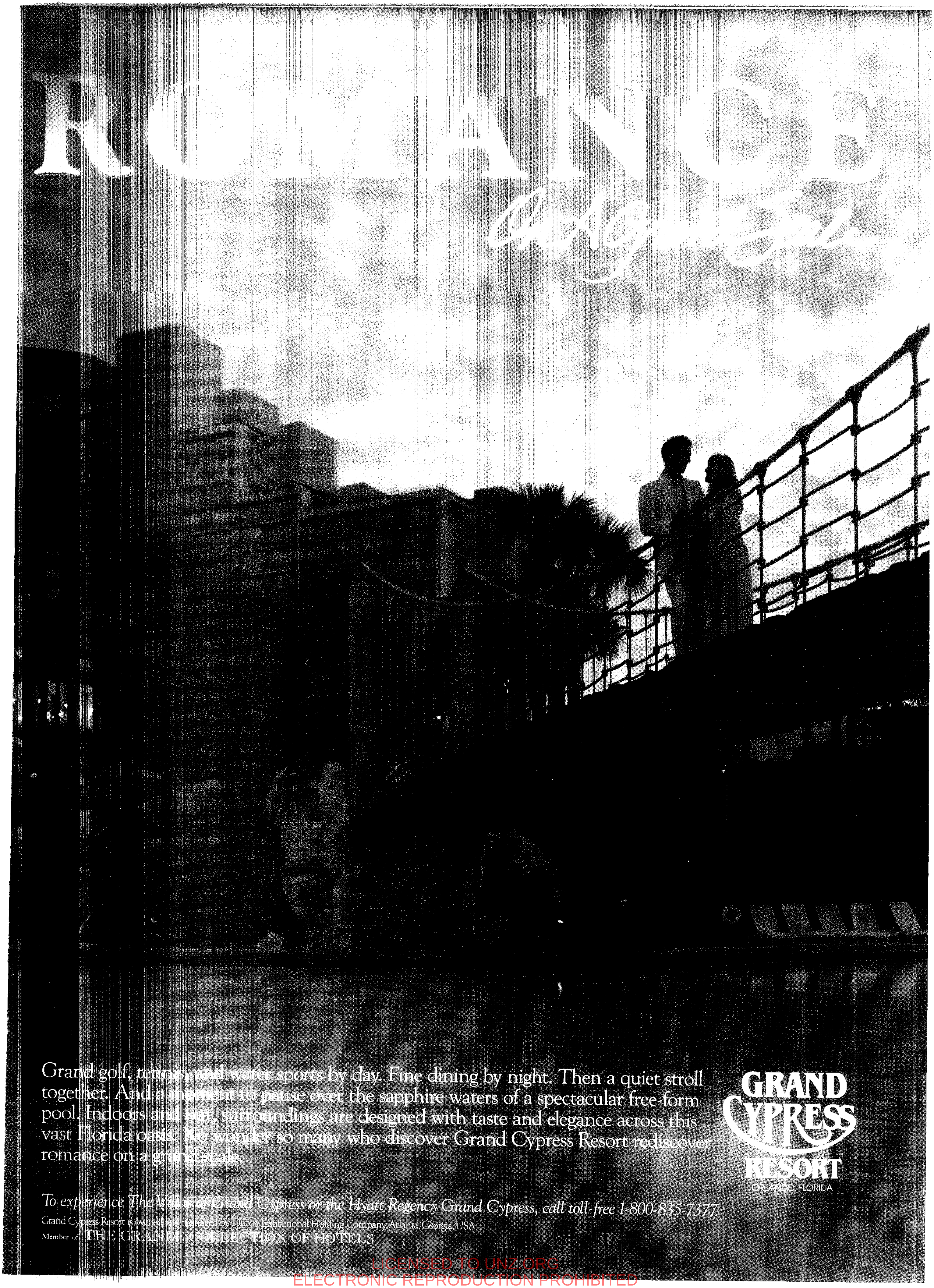
"And, like a fool, I said, 'So sue me.'"

• •

and fifty million pounds of dynamite—almost three hundred pounds every minute of every day—went up, very quickly, in one corner or another of America.

Dynamite has not removed itself from us; we've removed ourselves from it. It was, for instance, a staple of farm life. There it sat, a few sticks in a box down in the storm cellar next to the rat poison; or maybe there was a case of it, right along with the tenpenny nails and shovel handles, in the general store. But as the population shifted, went urban and suburban, and became generally less self-sufficient, things like stump removal, the destruction of beaver dams, the opening of trenches and irrigation ditches, the digging of outhouse sites, the laying of barn foundations all entered, for most of us, the realm of the nostalgic and the mythological. Nor do we tend to celebrate the massive or the thundering, or even the obviously sturdy, as we once *did*. Niagara Falls and Hoover Dam have given way to Epcot Center and Sea World. Dynamite is not modern—neither lightweight, nor minimal, nor antiseptic. It is raw and lunky—a rough-rolled, rough-crimped cylinder of utilitarian brown paper, quintessentially industrial, effortlessly brutal. The public horror that greeted nitroglycerin, dynamite's lethally unpredictable essence, now seems touching in its innocence. Eight ounces of high-strength dynamite contains about six hundred thousand foot-pounds of energy—enough to send a ten-pound typewriter eleven miles in the air, or a compact foreign sedan about three hundred feet in the same direction. That's impressive. The Hiroshima atomic bomb, a cylinder ten and a half feet long with a diameter of twenty-nine inches, was equal in power to a stick of dynamite twelve yards in diameter and as long as a football field. That's terrifying. A five-megaton warhead is analogous to a stick of dynamite the size of a fifty-story office building occupying a city block. Our demons have become the bacterial, the viral, the molecular, the subatomic. Tactile, hammerlike dynamite seems, by contrast, about as threatening as a belligerent old drunk in a crowd of icy-eyed assassins.

BEFORE there was dynamite, there were animals, men's backs, and black powder. By the early nineteenth century, black powder—a mixture of potassium nitrate (saltpetre), sulfur, and charcoal, and then the only practical explosive known to man—had been in existence, depending on which source you accept, anywhere from six hundred to twenty-two hundred years. Its origins have variously been ascribed to the Indian subcontinent or Greece or North Africa or China or England; for while the development of nitroglycerin and dynamite has been meticulously documented, the origins of black powder have come down to us as a mélange of legend, supposition, and occasional ethnocentric poutings. While some historians believe that Alexander the Great encountered explosives in India, and others suggest that some forms of Greek fire contained black powder, these claims are now generally discredited. And although there are records of explosives use during the thirteenth century both by Tunisians and by Egyptians—the latter possessed a catapult that caused a "cloud [to] spread in the air, which, making a noise like a fearful lightning and vomiting fire, did break, ignite, and incinerate everything"—the consensus is that these explosives had been acquired from the Chinese, who developed black powder sometime between the tenth and the twelfth centuries. Not only do Arabian records commonly refer to saltpetre as "Chinese snow" but Chinese annals mention, matter-of-factly, that during a minor siege in 1232 a catapult called the *ho pao*, or "fire-stone-throwing machine," was in use. Twenty-seven years later, it had been replaced by the *to lo tsi ang*. This "spear of vehement fire" was a no-nonsense Roman candle—a bamboo tube closed at one end and open at the other, in which black powder and rocks were inserted; the powder was lit with a fuse, and the rocks shot forth. Within four hundred years, the Chinese not only had replaced this instrument with a formidable black-powder arsenal—including the Great General; the One-Hundred-Shot Automatic Gun; and various land and sea mines, such as the River-Disturbing Dragon and a particularly nasty piece of work called the Challenging Myriad, whose destructive power was so great that troops and horses were "in-



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stantly smashed, by thousands" when the charge was released—but they also had come far enough along to develop an attitude toward black powder. Saltpetre is "extremely negative or moonish (Yin)," says the "Tien Kung Kai Wu" ("Exploitation of the Work of Nature"), an encyclopedia of the seventeenth century. "Sulfur is extremely positive and sunny (Yang)—that is, extroversive. When the two supernatural elements, Yin and Yang, meet each other in an exceedingly close space, the resulting explosion will stun every soul and shatter everything around it."

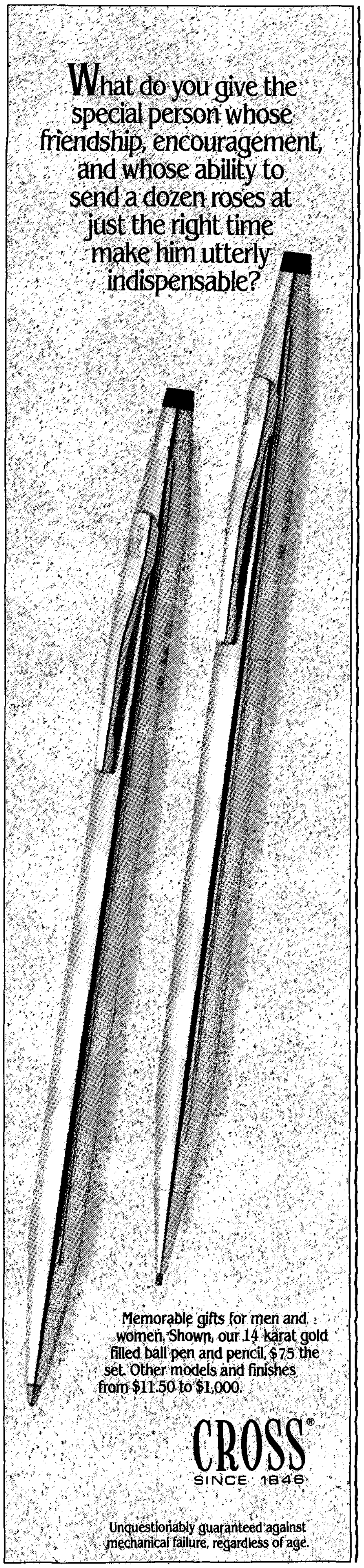
Europe began stunning souls with black powder in the early fourteenth century. The English Franciscan Roger Bacon set down the formula for black powder in 1242, but a German monk, Berthold Schwarz, is credited with developing the first European firearms, probably in 1313. Blustery, generally inefficient cannon were used at Crécy in 1346. As artillery became more powerful, saltpetre became more valuable, and in some countries there grew up thuggish collectors' guilds, with the right to enter a town and scrape the chemical (which forms naturally by the decay of nitrogen-rich substances such as animal wastes) from barns and vacant buildings. These workers could enter homes with their brushes and scrapers, and no building in France could be pulled down until the saltpetre collectors had been notified. In the mid-sixteenth century, Gustavus I of Sweden ordered cemetery grounds to be dug up in a search for saltpetre. Eventually, saltpetre plantations were established, many of which were little more than extensive dovecotes.

The first verifiable use of black powder for nonmilitary purposes occurred in 1627, in the royal mines of Hungary, but it was an isolated incident. The preferred ore-extraction methods well into that century remained pick-and-shovel or fire setting, in which rocks were first heated with wood fires, then doused with cold water, which cracked them. Black powder, while much more effective than fire setting, was strong enough only to tear rock from a mountain or a quarry wall in large chunks; these chunks then had to be broken up by hand. By the time black powder finally came into general nonmilitary use, in the early eighteenth century, it was already unable to keep pace with the demands of a rapidly industrializing world. Something much more powerful was needed.

In the mid-nineteenth century, both Western Europe and America—despite, and in many ways because of, nearly a century of profoundly accelerating technology—found their economies still in thrall to their terrain. The successful adaptation of the steam engine to drive foundry trip-hammers, rolling and boring machines, mill looms, and saws meant that factories had to be situated near coalfields. The symbiosis extended to the work force, transplanted from outlying locales. Food, clothing, and housing materials had to be brought in; factory products had to be moved out, in ever-widening patterns; and the established transportation systems were quickly overwhelmed.

Canal systems were slow and congested. Roads were muddy or dust-thick capillaries following old paths of least resistance, and were often impassable by heavy wagons. Rail lines showed great potential but needed ever-increasing amounts of rock for ballast and coal for engines, not to mention timber and iron for the rails themselves, if they were to grow into a reliable network. Most harbors were natural affairs, only meagrely protected from the elements, and inadequate—small, silt-prone, boggy, inefficient—for heavy traffic. Rivers, as yet untapped for electrical energy, flooded and dried up and regularly changed course. It was not easy, on the whole, to get things from here to there. And all the while the factories shrieked and clattered. To stay cost-efficient, they required long shifts and coal-gas lighting; more coal, then more iron ore; more workers, food, and shelter; more ambitious production schedules; wider markets; more efficient transportation and utility systems.

Hard-rock tunnelling, whether for mines or railroads, was a painstakingly slow process. In North Adams, Massachusetts, the Hoosac railroad tunnel, after ten years of steam drills and black powder, had advanced less than a third of the way toward its projected four-and-three-quarter-mile length. The American West was still effectively terra incognita; the Rocky Mountains and the Cascades were considered gargantuan enough to discourage any dreams of transcontinental linkings if the "old mixture," as Alfred Nobel described black powder, were the pri-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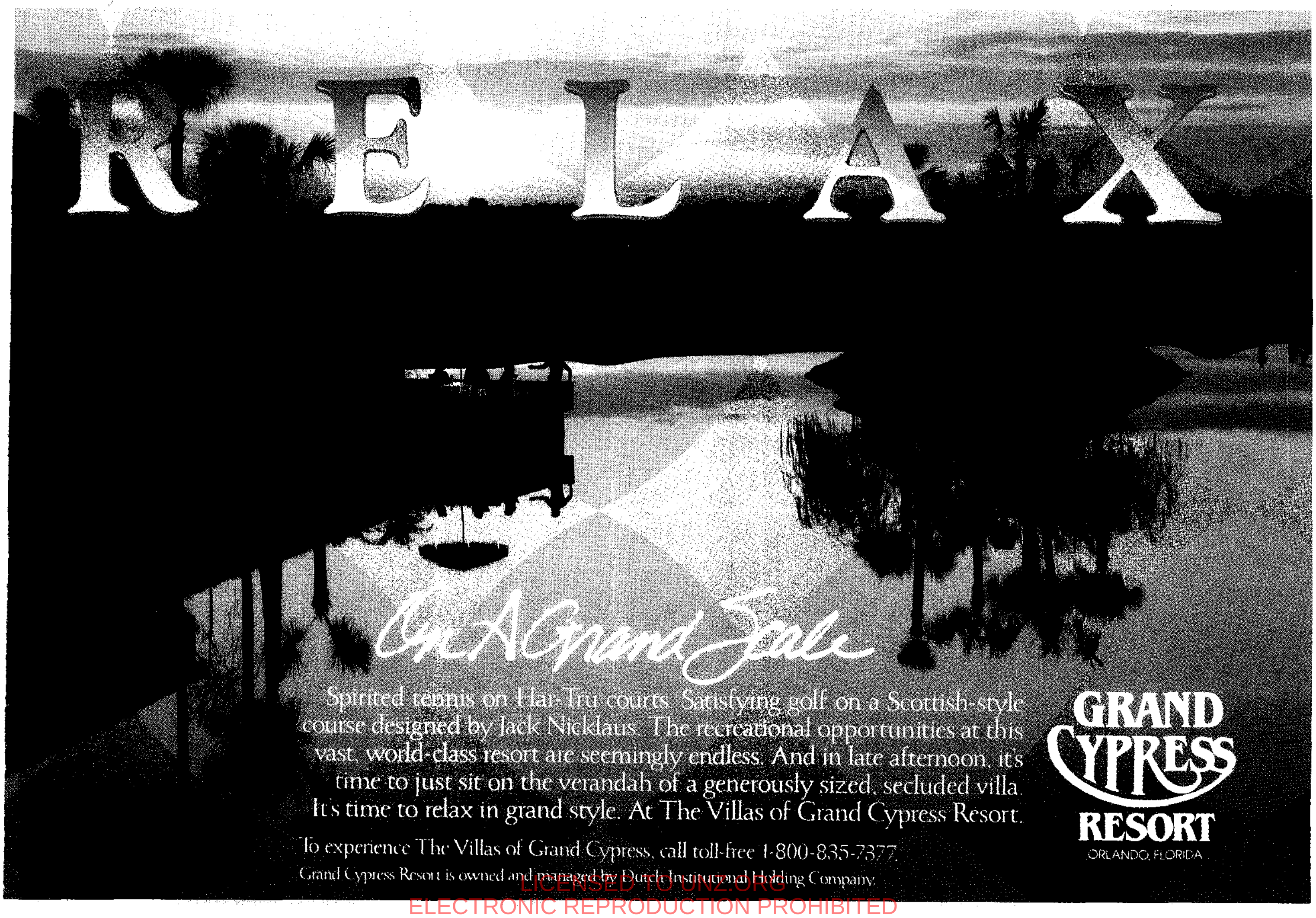
mary extra-human energy used. Black powder possessed "a truly admirable elasticity, which permits its adaptation to purposes of the most varied nature," he noted in an 1875 lecture. "Thus, in a mine it is wanted to blast without propelling; in a gun to propel without blasting; in a shell it serves both purposes combined. . . . But like a maid of all work, it lacks perfection in each department."

Nineteenth-century chemists, building upon the atomic theory postulated by the Englishman John Dalton in 1808, had become reasonably certain that the explosive properties of black powder resulted from the interaction of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon. Further, they realized that black powder was merely a mixture of these elements, rather than a new molecule—that, despite grinding, rolling, and sifting, its ingredients remained physically separate. It stood to reason that if these elements could be combined chemically the interaction between them would be much quicker and more efficient, thereby creating a more powerful explosive, one equal to the hard-rock tasks at hand.

Oxygen and nitrogen, the chemists already knew, created an exciting mixture when chemically bonded—the fuming, intensely corrosive nitric acid. Who knew what effect they could get by adding carbon? And carbon, handily enough, was everywhere. They began to combine nitric acid with every organic compound in sight—coal, coal dust, coal tar, charcoal, wood chips, sawdust, paper, chalk, sugar, cotton, linen. From this rush of nitration, as the blending process was called, emerged two products that would change the world. In 1846, Christian Schönbein, a German chemist, nitrated cotton cloth and produced a smokeless explosive, which he named *Schiessbaumwolle* (shooting tree-wool). Though guncotton, as it came to be called, caused many terrible factory explosions, much of the world's military adopted it, being anxious to replace black powder, which left battlefields clouded with a thick, choking pall of smoke. (Later, more precise calibration of the nitration solution gave rise to innovations such as celluloid, modern smokeless powder, cellophane, and synthetic fibres like rayon.) The second product—nitroglycerin, or "blasting oil"—was also discovered in 1846. An Italian chemistry professor named Ascanio Sobrero nitrated glycerin, a sweet carbon-rich oil used as a skin lotion, creating a powerful compound that, when heated, gave off noxious red, headache-producing vapors. A blotter soaked with a few drops of the new oil, when hit with a hammer, exploded with a window-rattling report.

Several years after Sobrero's discovery, Alfred Nobel began manufacturing blasting oil, in a small factory at Heleneborg, on the outskirts of Stockholm. In 1863, he engineered the first practical nitroglycerin detonation; he placed a tightly sealed tube of black powder inside a can of blasting oil and ignited the black powder with a simple fuse, thus duplicating from a safe distance the effect of Sobrero's hammer. Nobel had come across the principle of initial ignition, the idea of using one explosive to detonate a second, less sensitive explosive—a principle upon which all modern explosives, including thermonuclear devices, are based. A controlled explosion—whether it is a small charge in a quarry, or a hydrogen bomb—only seems to be a single pop. Instead, a delicate series of detonations occurs. For example, it is almost impossible to detonate a stick of dynamite by holding a match under



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it. But if the match flame is first applied to a length of fuse, the fuse lights and runs its length to a blasting cap, which is a short metal tube about the diameter of a pencil eraser and contains a sequence of high explosives. The fuse ignites an ignition compound in the cap powerful enough to ignite a second, less sensitive explosive, the priming charge, which, in turn, sets off a third high explosive, the base charge. This last is powerful enough to detonate the stick of dynamite itself. (In the case of an electrically initiated shot, the current enters the cap through two wires, called leg wires, which heat a fine, high-resistance bridge wire, embedded in a heat-sensitive explosive, to begin the detonation sequence.) Much modern industrial blasting adds one more step to this progression: the dynamite stick itself becomes the detonator for the new, relatively insensitive explosives known as blasting agents, which are often used in bulk form.

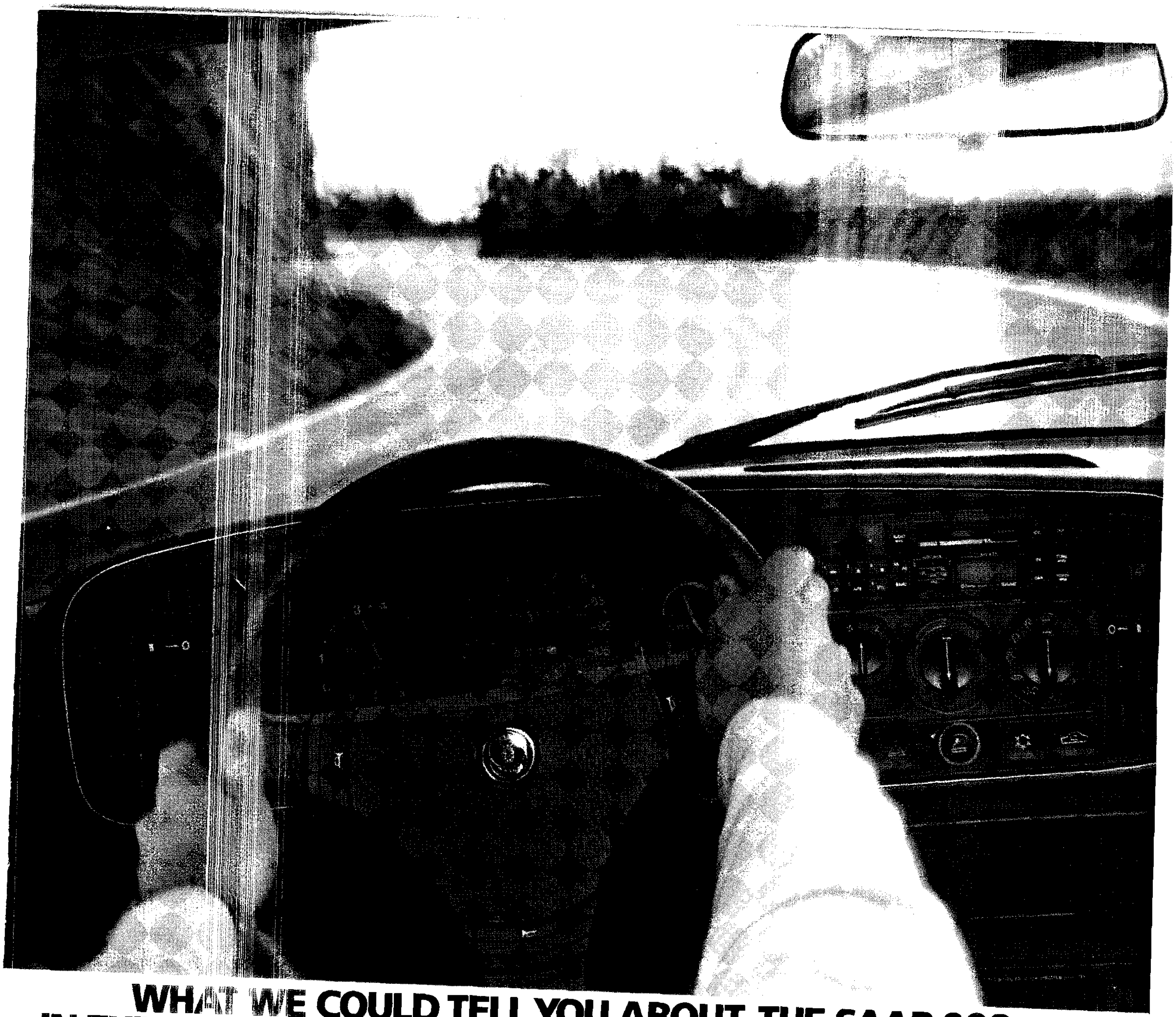
Nobel quickly patented his invention—which he called Nobel's Igniter—and began marketing it to energy-hungry construction firms. In September of 1864, the Nobel family's nitroglycerin factory blew up, killing five people, including Nobel's youngest brother, Emil. Although Alfred resumed manufacture at a new plant within six weeks, the explosion proved to be the first of a worldwide series of nitroglycerin explosions (in Germany, Panama, New York City, San Francisco, Sydney)—including an act of sabotage in which an American, William King Thompson, blew up a ship (as well as himself) in Bremerhaven harbor, as part of an insurance scam—which soon caused country after country to place crippling restrictions or outright bans on the manufacture and importation of nitroglycerin.

Nobel was convinced, wrongly, that nitroglycerin was very difficult to detonate without his patented igniter—as were many others, if stories of the oil being used as shoe and axle grease and lamp fuel are to be believed. But, faced with financial disaster, he set about searching for an absorbent, relatively riskless medium for nitroglycerin. In 1867, he finally settled on, and patented, the mixture of his oil with a nonexplosive, nonreactive, porous "siliceous earth . . . found in many parts of the globe and known under the several names of siliceous marl, tripoli, rotten-stone, etc.," the most common name of which is kieselguhr. By forming a dry batter that absorbed three times its own weight of nitroglycerin, kieselguhr would render the oil safe from all but the most severe blows and the most intense sudden heat. The new explosive, which took its name from δύναμις, the Greek word for "power," would absolutely mangle rocks, exploding with twenty times the shattering effect of black powder. Further, it was solid. Unlike blasting oil, it could be stuck in horizontal or overhead drill holes; it could be cut safely with a knife for the smallest of charges; it could withstand the roughest of journeys; and, at a dollar and seventy-five cents a pound to begin with, it was much cheaper in a cost-per-work-performed comparison than black powder.

Dynamite would soon dominate the world's explosives market. Existing nitroglycerin plants added dynamite lines, and new plants sprang up quickly: in California, near San Francisco, in 1867; in Finland and Massachusetts in 1870; in Scotland in 1871; in France, Germany, and Spain in 1872; in Switzerland, Italy, Portugal, and Hungary the following year; and after that in Australia, Japan, and Latin America. Nobel would sell twenty-two thousand pounds of dynamite in 1867 and seven times that the next year. Ninety years later, the figure would rise to about a billion pounds in the United States alone.

THREE problems emerged from Nobel's original dynamite formula: in wet holes, water tended to displace the nitroglycerin; the kieselguhr took no part in the explosion and actually absorbed some of its heat, lessening its effectiveness; and, finally, dynamite proved extremely difficult to detonate below about 55 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperature at which pure nitroglycerin freezes. The first two problems were solved with a combination of better packaging and a wide range of additives. Today, the shell of a dynamite stick is a stiff cylinder similar to a paper-towel core, double-wrapped with thick waxed paper. The "active dopes," as the additives are called, increase the explosive force of the nitroglycerin by as much as forty per cent. These chemicals, the most important of which is ammonium nitrate, were combined with the nitroglycerin in a bewildering number of ways; and in America, where patent law seemed to encourage diversity, the various dynamites were sold under an equally bewildering number of heroic brand names, including Giant Powder, Vulcan Powder, Neptune Powder, and Hercules Powder.

The problem of nitroglycerin's balmy freezing point was not solved



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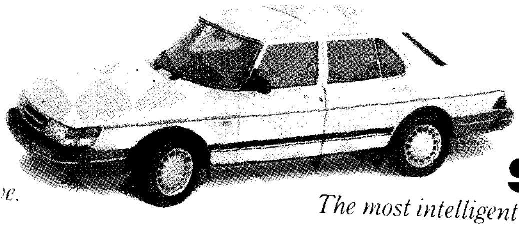

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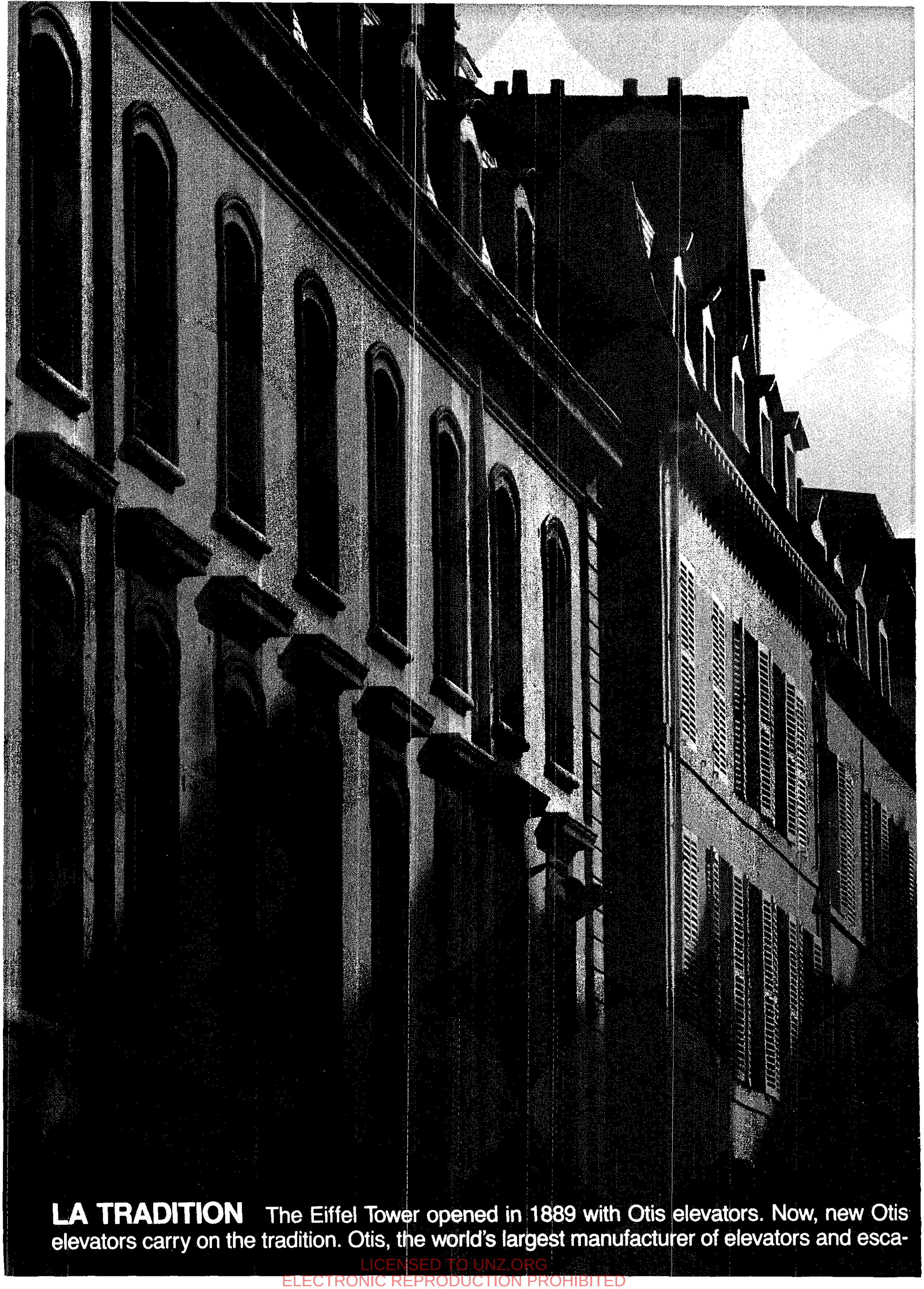

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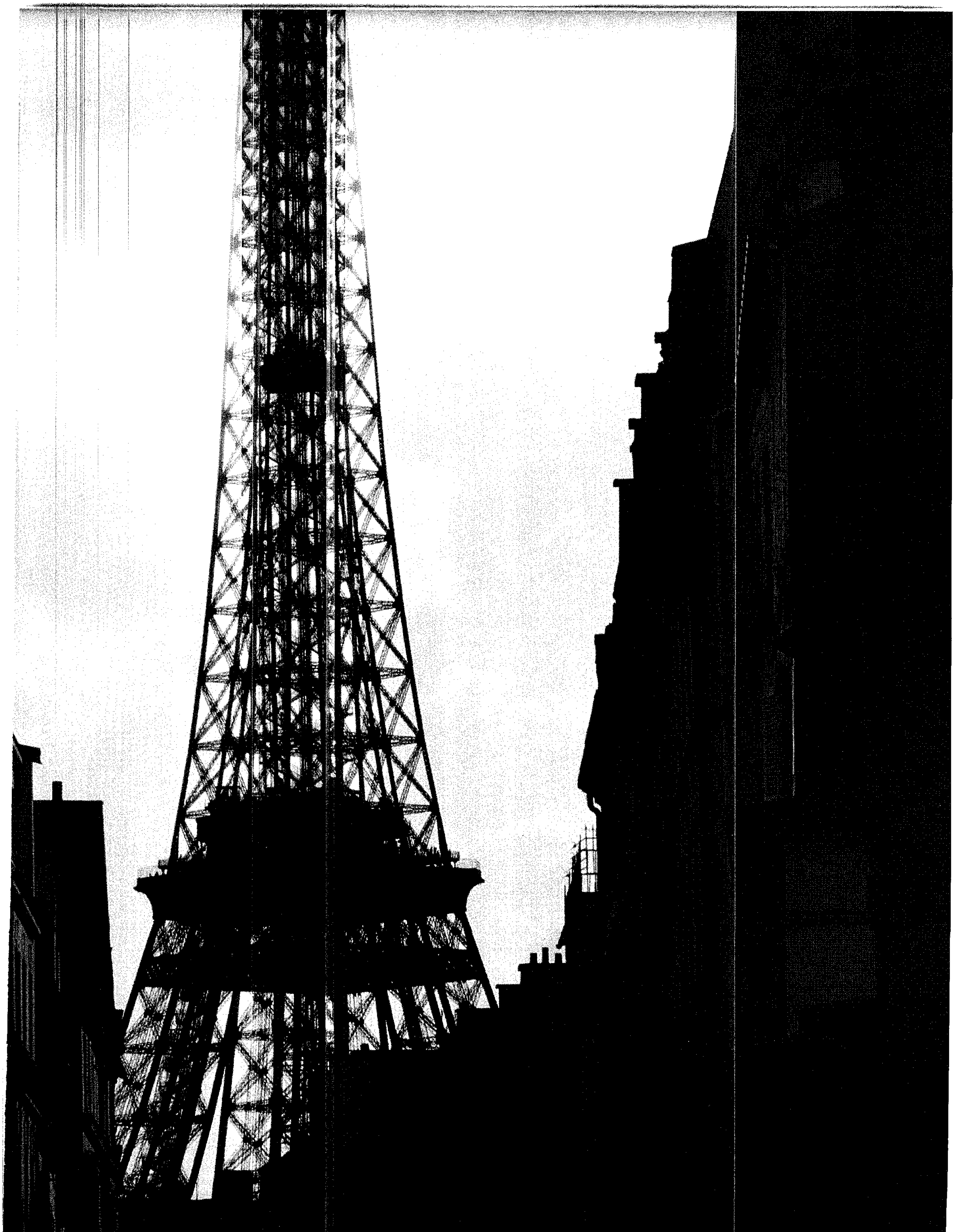

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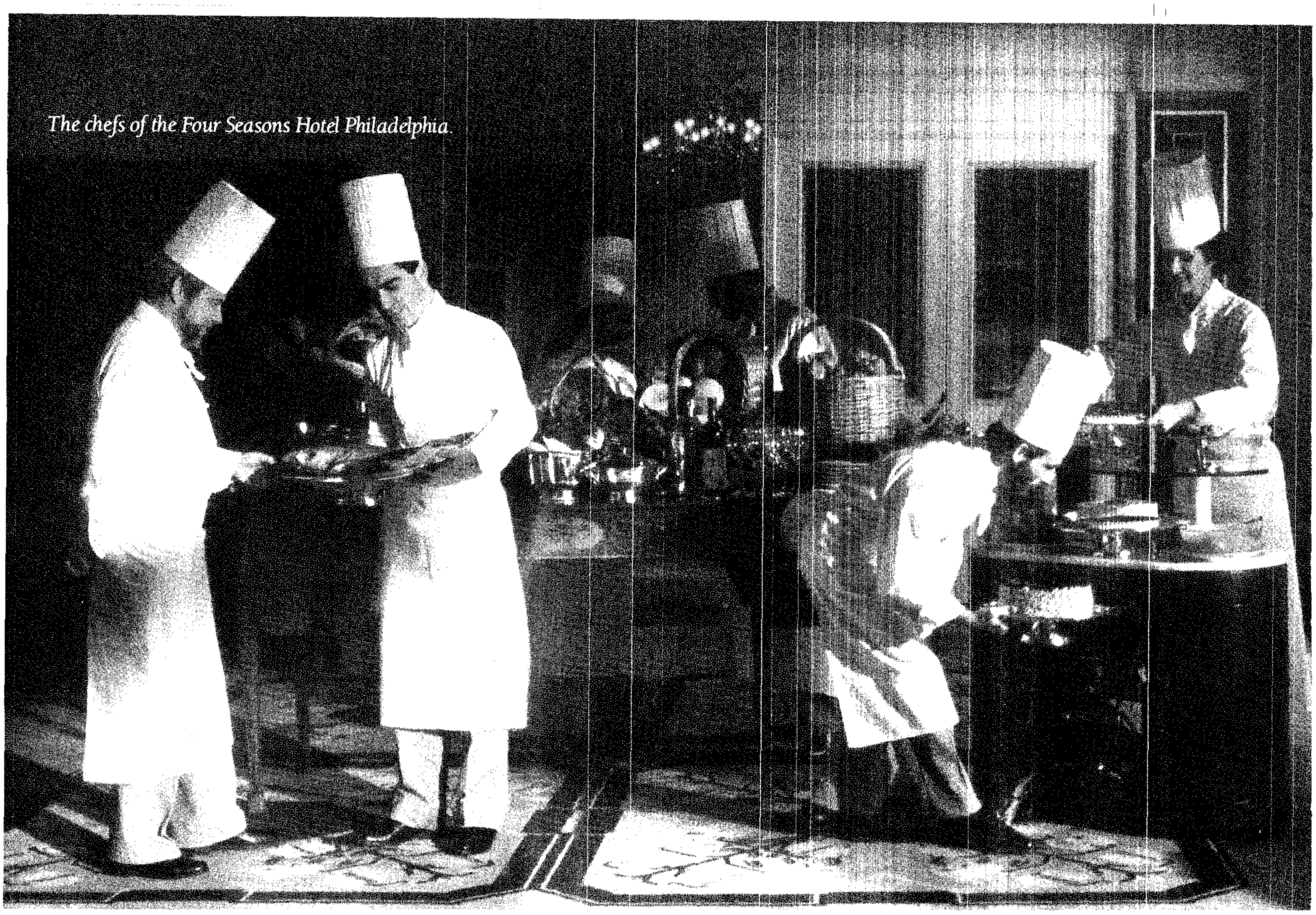

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"I'm starting to think stripes."

• •

until the nineteen-twenties, when part of the nitroglycerin was replaced by ethylene glycol dinitrate, which is molecularly similar to it. Pure nitroglycerin is nonexistent in today's dynamites. Until a solution was reached, however, nitroglycerin's freezing point gave rise to some bizarre practices and horrible incidents. The fact that the oil became extremely stable when frozen was supposedly discovered during the construction of the Hoosac railroad tunnel, in the mid-nineteenth century. One Hell Swazey, the story goes, was ordered to pick up some blasting oil to bring back to the job site and did so, but stopped off at a local dance on his return trip, where he got roaring drunk and was asked to leave. Swazey, in a rage, picked up one of the now frozen jugs of blasting oil that he had left under a buggy seat and hurled it through a window of the dance hall. Instead of obliterating the hall and its occupants, it merely skidded across the floor and smashed, stolid and stony, against the wall.

One way or another, the idea of freezing dynamite for safety gained widespread acceptance. Unfortunately, nitroglycerin becomes extremely unstable as it thaws, and must be brought back to warm temperatures very slowly. The extent to which caution was ignored is evident in manufacturers' early catalogues, which offered a long line of double boilers, called thawing kettles, and insulated "permanent thawing boxes." Manuals implored blasters not to thaw dynamite in front of furnace doors, or to hold sticks over an open fire, or to put sticks on stove tops or in frying pans or ovens. "Never Roast, Toast, Bake or Fry Dynamite or Bury It in Hot Embers," read the not-so-fine print of one manual. Surely the most macabre tale concerns a man who drank some of the sweet oil on a wager. His friends found his body the next day and carried it from the icy roadside where he had died to a nearby cabin. The body, as well as the nitroglycerin, which had been both consumed and spilled, thawed so rapidly that it and the house and the man's friends were blown to smithereens.

As dynamite replaced both black powder and straight nitroglycerin, an engineering revolution took place. Mines could be dug deeper more quickly, and uneconomical deposits thus became profitable. The extracted tonnage of copper, coal, and iron increased by the dozen- and hundredfold. New industries began; some seem so basic today that it is difficult to realize that they weren't always there. With the dynamite-stimulated quarrying of limestone, cement and concrete became common building products, replacing bricks and cobblestones. Bauxite, one of the world's more common ores, was virtually worthless until dams could be built—with dynamite—to provide the enormous amounts of electricity needed to smelt it into aluminum. Farmers cleared their land of stumps with a minimum of manual labor, and were then able to blow out ditches to irrigate the cleared land. And, finally, factory and marketplace were linked effectively.

Harbors were deepened and widened; breakwaters were extended; treacherous shoals in rivers, lakes, and harbor entrances were eliminated. And, what was perhaps most dramatic, overland transportation emerged as an efficient means of moving freight. Rutted, meandering roads became straighter, paved arterials. Railroads shored their shifting rights-of-way with ballast, and pushed straighter and farther into the wilds; traffic was thus able to pass over them faster, through mountains, over swamps, past deserts. They connected coaling stations and water stops, which became towns, later cities. And because dynamite could create dams to supply electricity, because dynamite could gouge out aqueducts to carry drinking and irrigation water, and because the roads themselves could bear the traffic that brought supplies, there was a demographic expansion. America, especially, found in dynamite a new set of muscles, and, as it would do later with the automobile, embraced dynamite with wild-eyed enthusiasm. From the first large construction project on which dynamite was successfully used—a mile-long railroad tunnel near Easton, Pennsylvania, begun in 1872—to the Alaska pipeline, which consumed many millions of pounds of dynamite, the attitude was one of "So much to do, so much space in which to do it."

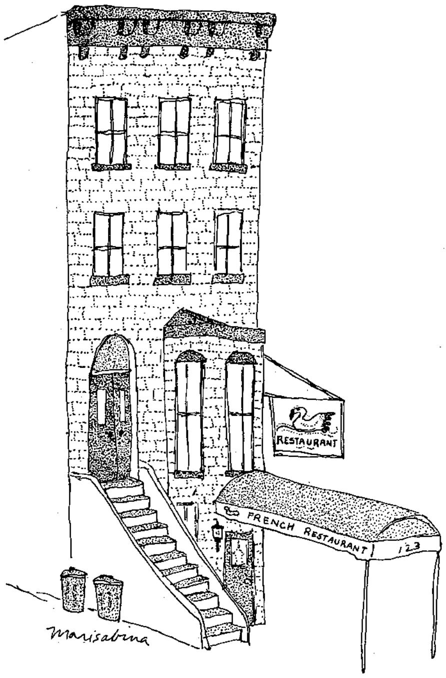
Dynamite greatly hastened the completion of transcontinental railroad lines. The Los Angeles–Owen's Valley water system consumed seven million pounds of dynamite—six million for the actual blasting of the waterway, a million more for ancillary work, and several hundred pounds for sabotage by angered valley residents undoing the work of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power. Hoover Dam required ten million pounds. Gutzon Borglum used six thousand pounds on Mt. Rushmore for Washington's face alone. While the destruction of shoals at Hell Gate channel, in the East River, was one of the most widely publicized early dynamite jobs, the two and a half million pounds of dynamite needed for its completion seem insignificant next to the many millions of pounds used in the construction of New York City's various aqueducts and reservoirs or to carve out the city's subways; or to create the Panama Canal, the dams of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Bonneville Power Administration, and nearly every roadcut on the interstate-highway system.

The fervor also extended to the innovative and the unusual, the dinky and the wacky. Dynamite was tried, unsuccessfully, as a humane alternative to hand- and air-powered hammers in slaughterhouses. In the eighteen-eighties, it reportedly brought a brief respite from drought in New York City, when two hundred pounds of the explosive was sent up in a balloon and detonated, and in Texas, where an explosion brought about "a sharp clap of thunder, followed by heavy rain." During the San Francisco earthquake, dynamite by the ton was used to create backfires and firebreaks to defeat the racing flames. Unfortunately, the explosions were inexpertly planned, and only added to the horror by showering debris—in the form of lumber, furniture, and bedding—to feed the flames; they even started new fires in Chinatown, which had previously been untouched. Dynamite has been used to snuff out raging fires in oil wells and natural-gas wells all over the world. It has also been used to create both moose and duck habitats, by deepening silt- and plant-clogged ponds, thereby reversing their eutrophication. A more controversial habitat creation involved blowing off the crowns of old-growth timber, thereby hastening the process of decay in tree trunks and forming living space for cavity-nesting birds. It has served to dispose of rotting pack-animal carcasses in bear country, atomizing them on the spot to destroy unnatural food supplies for bears and make National Park trails passable for backpackers.

Finally, there is Patrick Albert O'Brien, a seventy-one-year-old daredevil who, after a long career of climbing into a paper coffin at county fairs, sporting events, and shopping centers around the country and allowing the coffin to be blown up by "explosive charges," has, he feels, more than earned his stage name of Captain Dynamite. According to O'Brien—whose hearing is not what it once was, although he is otherwise in decent health—being blown up is "a little like drinking a half pint of whiskey all at once, but it's a living—it beats picking cotton."

FOR the last couple of years, I've had a stick of dynamite on my desk. Given to me by a friend, it is gutted—its explosive filling removed. It couldn't explode on a bet. I know that, but each time I lift it (empty, it has the heft of a quality diploma) or smell it (doctors' offices and high-school labs), every time I look at the stick, even glance at it, it scares me. This happens because a while back I finally saw dynamite "do some work," as those who handle explosives for a living like to say.

Until recently, along State Highway 200 about fifteen miles from my home in western Montana, there was a quarter-mile-long double dogleg known locally as Rainbow Bend. Rainbow Bend—it would have been named Dead Man's Curve wherever understatement is a less celebrated trait—sat in the middle of two longish straight stretches through the deep, shadow-squeezing walls of the Blackfoot River Canyon. Especially in the winter, when traffic-pressed snow and drifting river moisture turn the highway to a sheet of black ice, Rainbow Bend presented the sort of unexpected treachery that kills some people, injures more, and makes believers out of the rest. Its accident rate was four times the state-highway average. Forget driver quality, vehicle pedigree—you rolled into Rainbow Bend's twenty-degree twists on the wrong day and there was nothing to do but duck twice and wish it were Thursday. When some long-standing right-of-way problems were finally solved by the abandonment of a railroad line that hugged the canyon wall, the State Highway Department arranged to level a warehouse-size hill on the west side of the highway, to unbend the bend once and for all.



When I visited the job site, the two blasters, Bill Knutson (the "K" is not silent) and Ernie Kroll, were nearly ready to break for lunch, after which they would set off a dynamite shot that would lower the hill by a couple of dozen feet. During the previous few days, they had drilled sixty-odd boreholes, each about three inches in diameter and anywhere from eight to thirty feet deep, into the top of the hill. Then they had filled each borehole with a stick of dynamite embedded with a blasting cap, and a blasting agent to be initiated by the dynamite's detonation. The blasting agent was ammonium nitrate, in BB-size prills coated with fuel oil, and it was poured into the holes, over the dynamite, directly from fifty-pound paper sacks. Then the crew topped each hole with a few feet of dirt (a process called stemming) to prevent a good part of the explosive force from shooting right out of the borehole.

After lunch, Knutson and Kroll finished connecting the electrical wires that led from the detonating caps up the boreholes in pairs. These leg wires, once connected hole-to-hole, would be spliced to a larger wire called the shot line, or firing line, whose ends are attached to the terminals of a detonating machine called, alternatively, a shooting box, a blasting machine, a shot-firer, a shooter, or (especially on late-night television) a hellbox. The detonating machine that Knutson and

Kroll were using was a wooden box with a T-shaped ratcheted plunger—a dead ringer for those hellboxes.

"She's an old one, all right," Ernie said. "We usually use small, battery-powered shooters, about the size of a couple of cigarette packs."

Bill laughed. "Yeah, never used one of these before," he said. "You gotta push down on that handle so hard your feet leave the ground. When we shoot, Ernie will have to tell me if there's much ground vibration. I'll be up in the air." He peered at the box. "Matter of fact, the only time I've ever seen one of these deals before was in a Road Runner cartoon."

I remarked that another worker at the job had been disappointed with some of the earlier blasts, because there hadn't been much to see.

"That's good to hear," Bill said. "We don't want a lot of flyrock. If we've done this right, she'll just make a *whoopf*. If she cracks—flies—we're in trouble. People get hurt, things get smashed. Oh, it's gotta move. We want it to heave. It doesn't do any good if she just lies there. But for a lot of those old-timers the louder it was, the better. If that shot didn't flat-ass rattle the cages, they felt it wasn't any good. We don't work that way."

After Bill and Ernie finished connecting the leg wires to the shot line, they unrolled the line from a large spool toward the shelter of a huge bulldozer blade some two hundred yards away, where they would first test the circuit with a galvanometer and then initiate the blast. At Bill's suggestion, I hitched a ride a few hundred yards up the highway, where a flagman had begun stopping traffic. Seven cars and a logging truck waited there; except for the truck, which rumbled quietly, like a large napping dog, their engines had been turned off. The small crowd of drivers and passengers stood by their vehicles and said nothing, eyes fixed on the hump where the explosion would take place. The job foreman made one last sweep in his pickup truck, to make sure that the road between us and another flagman, out of sight around the corner, was clear. After a minute or so, we heard several faint blasts from a hand-held air horn. Everything became silent, except for the truck, the hum of wind through pine trees, and the soothing rush of the spring-melt-swollen river.

Then, noiselessly, the top of the hump rose twenty feet, hung, and dropped, like a flailed blanket resettling over a bed. A muffled thump

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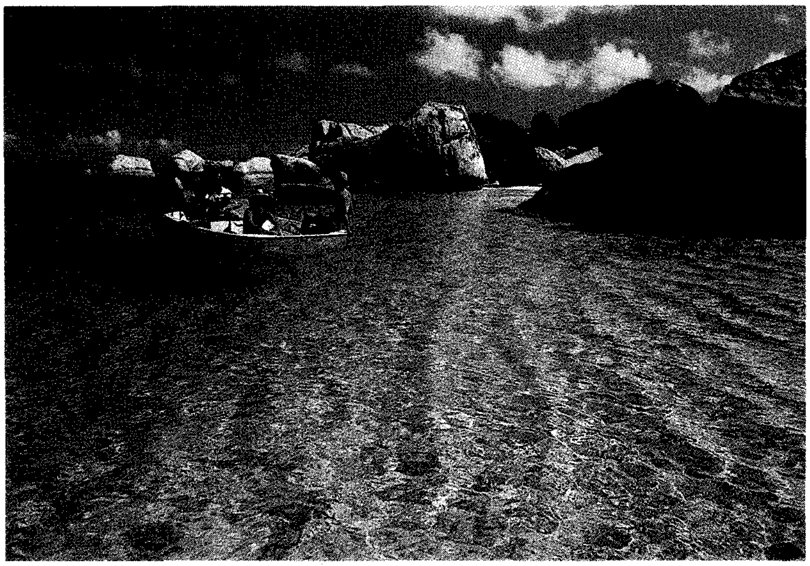

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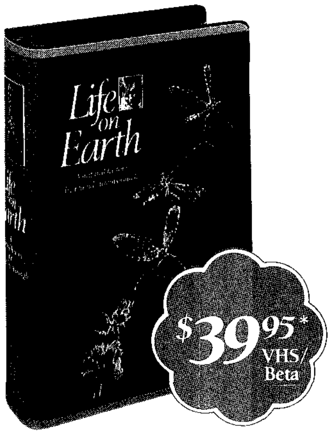

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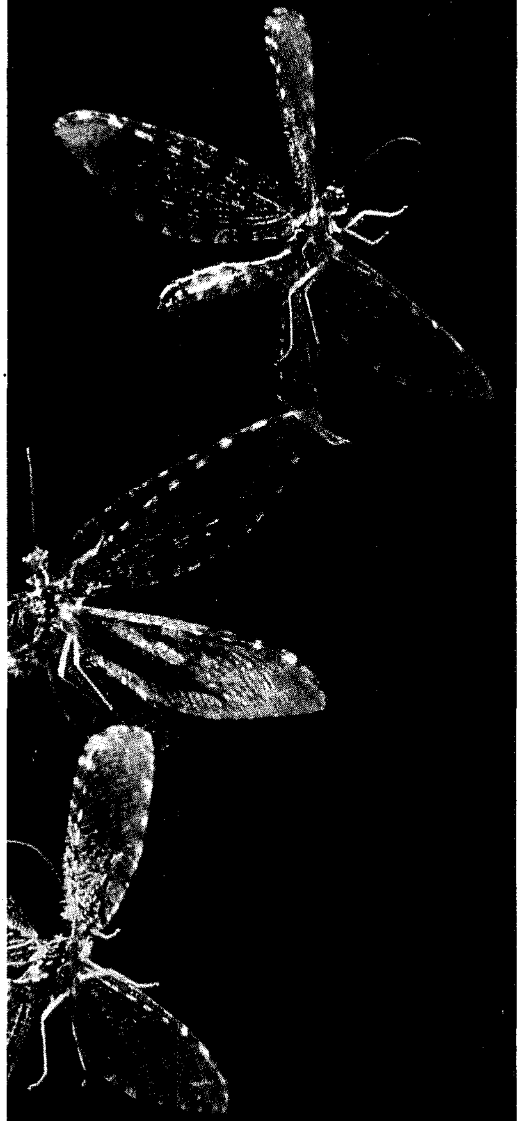

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followed—the sound of a mattress falling at one's feet—and a cloud of dust and smoke which had shot a hundred yards or so into the air began its windswept way toward a small draw, while down the near slope of the hump a stain of dark scree spilled. Car engines caught, and the flagman waved the road clear.

I hurried back to the blast site. What had seemed so billowy, so abstract and slow and orderly, from afar was chaos up close. I was gazing at thousands and thousands of sharp-edged rocks, some the size of paperweights, others the size of cantaloupes, basketballs, hibachis, backpacks, ice chests, steamer trunks, compact cars, toolsheds. The very ground on which I had so recently stood and walked and sat drinking coffee with Bill and Ernie—immutable, dependable, taken-for-granted solid earth—had become little more than some Precambrian-quartzite saltine crushed by a giant's hand. In this actual aftermath, all the reading I had done about explosives, all the technical terms—weight/strength ratios, detonation velocity, borehole pressure, kilocalories, kilobars—dwindled into insignificance.

As the scrapers and bulldozers moved in, I walked away, shivering. I recalled, on the way home, a recent conversation I had had with Curt Wilson, a huge, bearded blaster whose physical dimensions are more properly measured in cubic yards than in feet, inches, and pounds. We had been talking in a general way about his work on the Alaska pipeline, and the hundreds of thousands of pounds of explosives he had seen shot there, and how tiny, in comparison, the Rainbow Bend job was. At one point, Curt looked down at the table for a second to collect his thoughts, then said that the size of a blast didn't really matter. "You've got to remember this, Bryan," he said sternly. "With dynamite, you're working with something that is designed with one purpose only—to totally destroy everything it comes in contact with."

MUCH complex molecular scurrying takes place during an explosion. Nearly as much scurrying has taken place in attempts to define this phenomenon. Many of the attempts are highly technical, extending, with variations and exceptions, for pages. But the most graceful and generally instructive was set forth in 1904 by H. W. L. Hime, a British Army officer, in his "Gunpowder and Ammunition." An explosion, Hime wrote, is the "sudden and violent generation, with a loud noise and in a time inappreciable by the unaided senses, of a very great volume of gas by the combustion of a body occupying a comparatively very small volume."

This definition does not apply to nuclear explosions, in which huge amounts of energy are released in the form of gamma rays and radioactive nuclear particles. Nor does it apply to mechanical explosions of the sort caused by impact—the smashing of a watermelon with a baseball bat, say. But it is well suited to chemical explosions, a category that runs from the simple, whooshing evaporation of water produced when a glowing horseshoe is dipped in a cooling tub to the thunderous breakup of a stick of dynamite.

To understand such explosions, we might consider much of the chemical world as a complex, varied system of what are known as oxidation-reduction, or redox, reactions—small events in which the electrons in orbit around one element "split off" and combine with another element. As the electrons draw closer to the second element, they sink to a lower energy state. Since energy can be neither created nor destroyed, the extra energy is given off as heat. The first element is oxidized (it loses electrons), and the second element is reduced (it gains electrons). This happens in an activity as fundamental as respiration, where the difference in energy between the oxygen we inhale and the carbon dioxide we exhale burns blood sugars. In the case of a simple campfire, oxygen reacts with the wood's carbon and hydrogen, and the resulting energy differential is given up as heat and light. Rusting is another redox reaction, with the iron "burned" like the firewood, and Fe_2O_3—rust—a result.

An explosion is an extremely specific, extremely rapid, and often mysterious redox reaction. The mystery lies in the mechanism—the catalyst—that prompts the electrons to change places with all possible haste. (The haste is the key. A single stick of dynamite placed on a low flame might smolder for hours, releasing low-level energy all the while, but that same stick detonated by a blasting cap will blow you into the next county. A fist pushing softly against your nose for two minutes is considerably different from a punch.) Some manufactured explosives are sensitive to shock, some to heat, and some to both. Nitroglycerin burns

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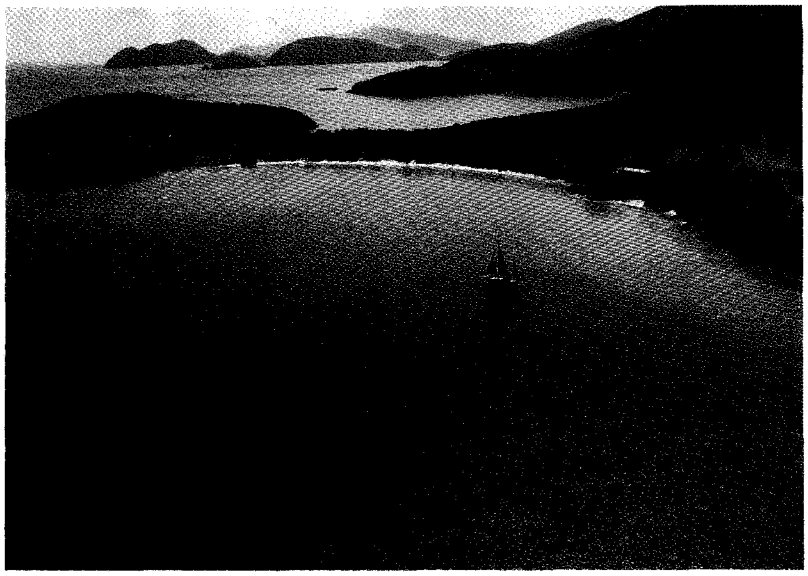

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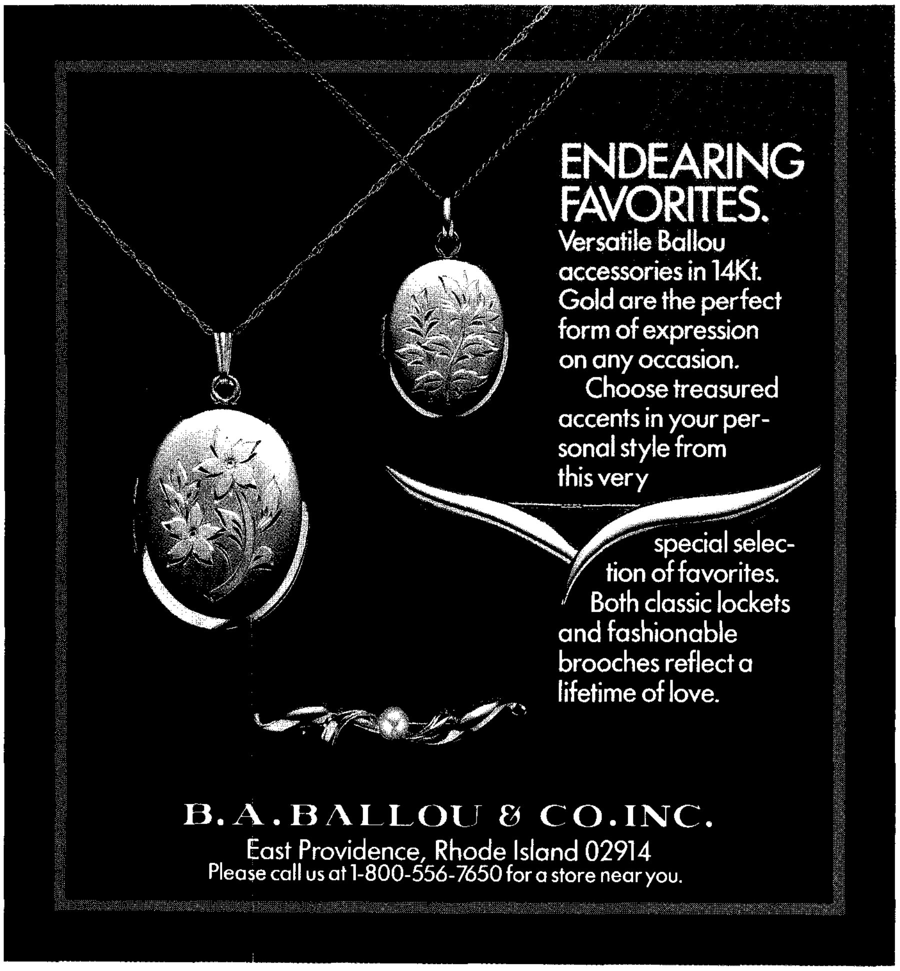

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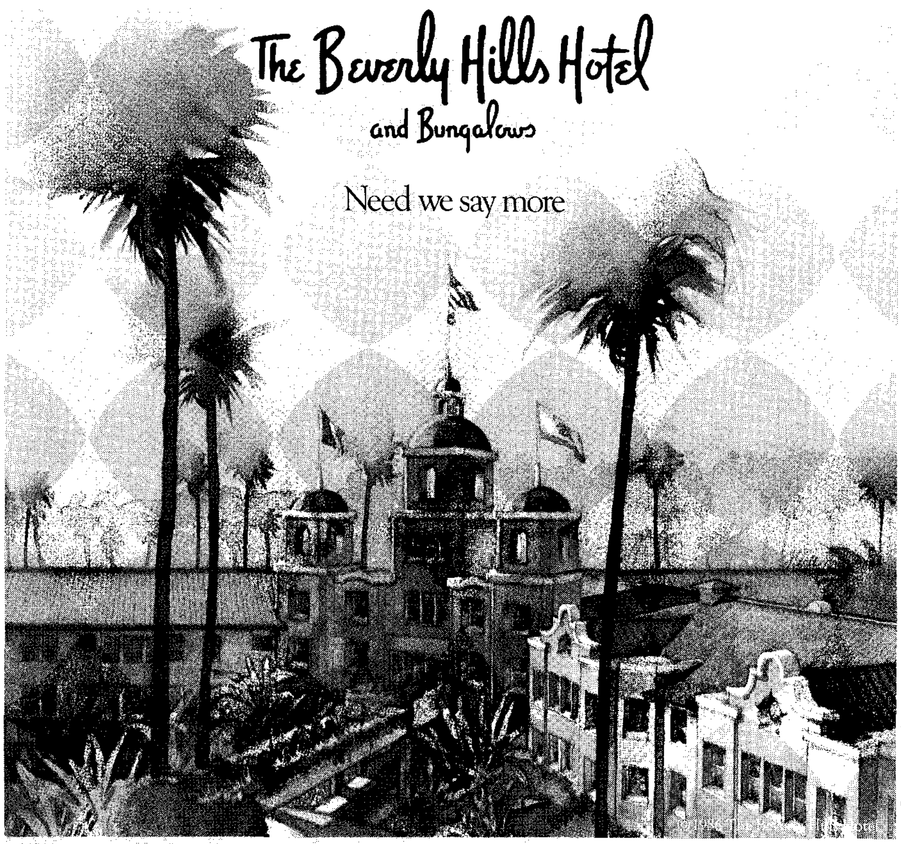
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in the open with a sputtering flame and will probably not detonate unless it receives some kind of strong shock. On the other hand, there are exotic explosives so sensitive to shock that a feather or a puff of air will set them off. During his less sensitive, teen-age years, a friend of mine with an experimental bent used to perform executions with nitrogen iodide, one of the delicate ones. In a slurry, this material is safe; dry, it is highly unstable. "I would leave it around in small amounts to dry, mixed with sugar," he relates in a recent letter. "When flies lit upon it, they received a rude and dismembering surprise!"

Why a particular explosive is sensitive to heat, shock, or both is poorly understood in many cases. We haven't learned to understand explosives so much as we've learned to control them. Heat causes an increase in the internal kinetic energy of molecules. This may cause already unstable substances to fly apart. Shock probably perturbs molecules more quickly than heating does. The initial energy release forms a shock wave that detonates the rest of the material.

Early-nineteenth-century chemists realized that a chemically bonded compound like nitroglycerin produces a much faster redox reaction than a mixture of discrete materials (black powder) does. The chemical blend will also produce much less unburned fuel as soot and smoke. Black-powder reactions are inefficient and dramatically smoky. Dynamite explosions are not. Many "dynamite" explosions on television or in the movies are not produced by dynamite at all. Usually, they are explosions of naphthalene or gasoline, set off by tiny bombs of black powder. Thaine Morris, a special-effects technician whose explosives work was used in "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "Ghostbusters," told me, "If you used high explosives like dynamite to blow up a shack, you'd have a big bang, a little smoke, a few pieces of wood, and a little flash of light. That's not very visual." Dynamite is excellent for underwater scenes, however, because of its good water resistance and the great amount of water it can throw. Technicians created the demise of the shark in "Jaws," for example, with dynamite and a quantity of crimson foam.

Lazily, we could define the flaring of a match as an explosion: gases expanding quickly from a condensed body of matter. But the speed of the reaction has only the merest relation to that of a bursting stick of dynamite. Combustion speed—the rate at which a reaction proceeds through a length of matter—is divided into two broad categories: deflagrations and detonations. Materials that are consumed at a rate of less than five thousand feet per second usually fall into the former class. Black powder is a deflagrant. It is consumed at approximately fifteen hundred feet per second, while nitroglycerin races along at about twenty-five thousand feet per second. Both deflagrating and detonating materials, when initiated, begin by deflagrating—they burn. Deflagrating explosives, however, do not, under normal circumstances, ever achieve what is called a D.D.T.—a deflagration-to-detonation transition. Make no mistake, though: if a low explosive—another term for deflagrants—is adequately confined, or if there is enough of it present, the results can be devastating. It is possible to goose black powder into performances that make any deflagration/detonation distinction purely academic. The classic anarchist bomb, usually a globe of cast metal filled with black powder, is a good example of a confined deflagrant at work.

A match does not make a D.D.T. When we light a match, the gases created expand so slowly that the surrounding molecules of air have time to get away—to be pushed into the surrounding atmosphere in a dispersion pattern not entirely unlike the exodus from a picnic table at the end of a family reunion. In a detonation, however, and in higher-velocity deflagrations, the molecules do not have time to be displaced in an orderly fashion; they are actually compressed, creating a tremendous pressure, a shock wave—the family picnic has become a stampede. The D.D.T. of a high explosive like dynamite is so rapid that its detonation velocity—the speed with which the detonation moves from one end of the stick to the other—can be considered a constant. The reaction travels in the form of a thin wafer of mutating fury, called the primary reaction zone, preceded by a supersonic shock wave. Expanding gases emerge from this wafer, adding considerable punch to the shock wave.

A stick of dynamite is placed in a borehole. It is detonated. The shock wave passes through the rock, which can withstand compressive forces ten to twenty times greater than tensile, or stretching, forces. The shock wave exerts a tensile force: it actually pulls the rock apart. Passing through what

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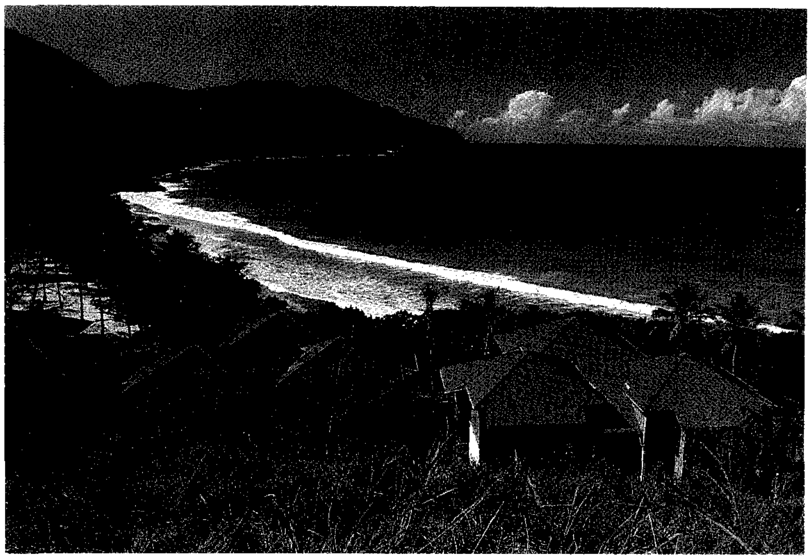

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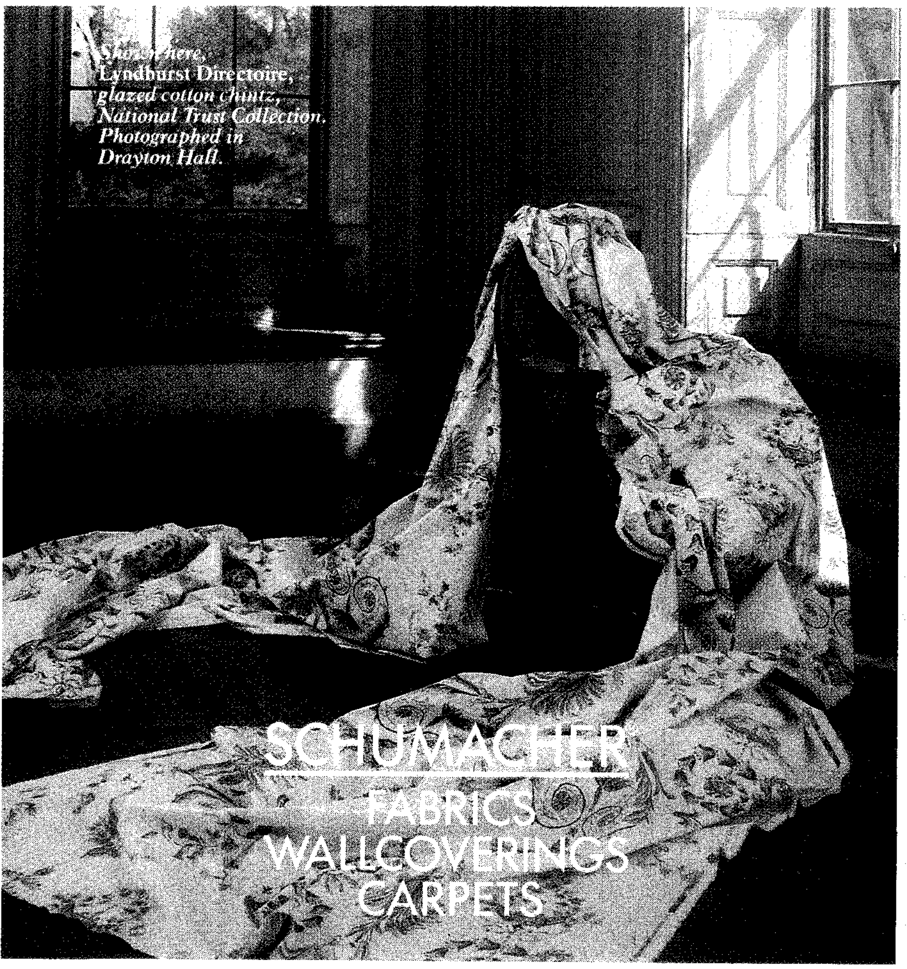

Shown here, Lyndhurst Directoire, glazed cotton chintz, National Trust Collection. Photographed in Drayton Hall.

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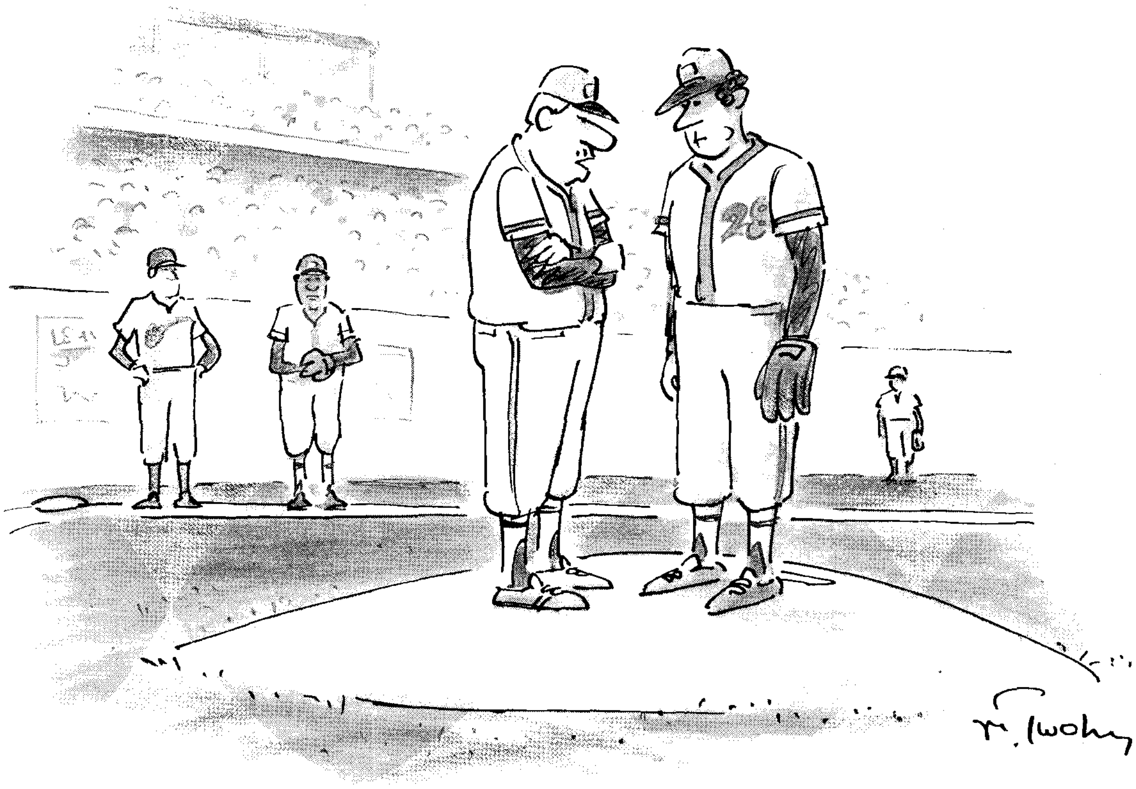
blasters poetically call the burden, it rips along until it comes to the end of the rock. Blasters call this end the free face; think of it as a cliff. At that point, most of the wave is reflected back into the rock, where it causes still more disruption, though its power is now reduced. At the free face, some of the cliff will spall, creating a new free face, which will spall in turn. This visible breakage is deceptive, if we are tracing an explosion's work schedule. Although it may seem that the destructive effects begin at the outside, the opposite is true. The expanding gases emerging from the primary reaction zone are working their way into the many imperfections of the burden—those already present and those created by the shock wave. The gases widen those cracks, pushing the burden outward and creating, essentially, thousands of mini free faces.



"I'd like you to excel."

• •

The portion of the shock wave that has not been reflected back into the burden continues into space. We hear it (sound is compressed air) and may, depending on our distance from the blast zone, feel it. In effect, we are receiving a greatly weakened version of what the rock burden "feels." If a window facing the blast is subjected to this shock wave and is far enough away not to be immediately shattered, the partial vacuum that follows the shock wave causes the window to rebound in the direction of the explosion. It falls onto the street, not into the building.

When we create nitroglycerin, we have bonded the various atoms—arrested, confined them—artificially, temporarily. Detonation opens the chutes and lets the atoms buck to freedom—to their natural state in the universe, their lowest energy level. As a result of an explosion, in addition to broken rock, at least one metaphor appears. When living things die, their bound-up atoms are released—into humus, into the air. Death, then, may be considered the beginning of a noiseless and slow—mighty slow—explosion.

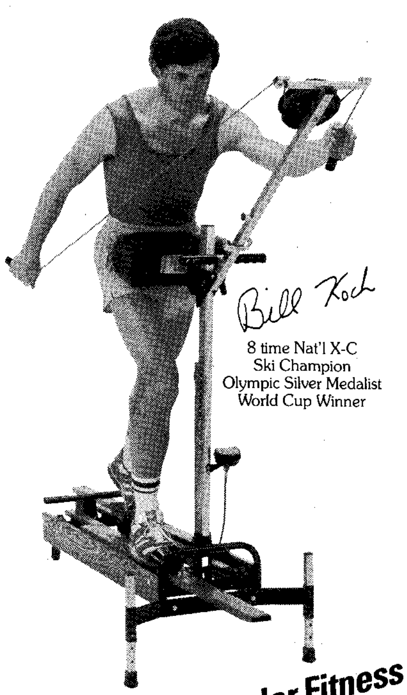
IN the spring of 1986, I visited the IRECO dynamite plant in Bessemer, Alabama, a dusty town of thirty thousand people half an hour's drive southwest of Birmingham. The "powder plant," as it was called by Bessemer residents, was then one of only four operating dynamite plants left in the United States (there used to be scores of them), the others being an IRECO plant in Carthage, Missouri; an Atlas Powder Company plant in nearby Joplin; and a small plant operated by the Independent Explosives Company of Pennsylvania, near Scranton. The Bessemer plant also made pentaerythritol tetranitrate, a high explosive used in blasting caps, as well as commodity-strength nitric acid for the fertilizer and pickling industries. It was not a factory in the sense of a large central building and a cluster of satellites. To prevent an explosion at one production area from destroying the entire facility, the work stations at Bessemer, as at other explosives plants, were built at some remove from each other. The plant's array of low white wooden buildings—stretching across two hundred acres on a small, creek-straddling valley floor—was as anonymous and grim as a small Second World War military base. Many of the buildings on the powder line were dwarfed by timber-framed, earth-filled walls twenty feet high and twenty feet wide at the bottom, and tapering upward to a three-foot-wide ridge. If an explosion were to occur, the barricades would force the shock wave and debris up into the air, rather than out toward other buildings.

At the plant's entrance, there were no searchlights, no tire-destroyers, no killer dogs straining at leashes, not even a simple wooden gate. In their place was a small glass kiosk and a security guard, who greeted me with a wide, slow smile, checked my identification, cleared me with the main office, and handed me a clip-on identification badge with "Visitor" stamped on it.

"Do you have any cigarette lighters or matches?" he asked.

I handed over my matches and asked if he wanted my cigarettes as well.

"They're O.K.," he said, putting the matches on a shelf inside the ki-



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osk. “You can smoke in the main offices and the lunchroom. It's just that someone goes inside, reaches for a cigarette from habit, and then there's the matches. They don't want that. While ago, a lady came in to demonstrate a new kind of welding rod. She's inside and reaches for something in her purse, one of those big ol' purses that hold about everything in the world”—he spread his hands wide before his chest—“and books of matches started fallin' all over. They chewed me out on that, but she told them I'd asked. I'm supposed to.”

Ever since local authorities banned the manufacture of nitroglycerin within the Stockholm city limits after the explosion that killed Emil Nobel, and Alfred moved his business to a barge on Lake Mälaren, explosives factories have been established on relatively isolated and naturally barricaded sites. The Bessemer plant was surrounded by two square miles of steep, thickly wooded hills supporting healthy and abundant populations of deer and wild turkey.

“It's basically a game preserve,” Richard Best, the plant manager, told me. “It isn't fenced, but we do patrol the area and prosecute anyone we find hunting there. Despite the potential danger”—dynamite can be detonated by a rifle shot—“there are people who will hunt around here. The main road is always guarded, and the magazines”—small buildings spread throughout the grounds, for storage of shipment-ready explosives—“are kept under dual hardened-steel lock and key. If you didn't use the main road, you'd have to get here cross-country, on foot, motorcycle, or all-terrain vehicle.”

The working analogy throughout the explosives industry is that making dynamite is just like making a cake: there are dry ingredients—the descendants of the absorbents and active dopes of the earliest dynamites—and there are liquid ingredients. They are combined; there you go. But, as Best explained, the similarities are purely superficial. “One of the things we always do is take new workers out to the bomb butt”—a testing area on the grounds—“and set off a stick or two for them, just to keep them reminded that while we may say we're baking a cake here we're not using flour and salt and eggs and milk.”

Best, a round-faced man who walks with the aggressive agility of the high-school football back he once was, estimated that his plant was capable of producing between three hundred and four hundred different kinds of cake. “I'd say, though, that about two hundred of those differences are a matter of size, and the rest are qualitatively different,” he said, as we set out on a tour of the grounds. “Different dynamites for different purposes. Back a few years ago, we made some sticks up to ten feet long, weighing maybe a hundred pounds. We didn't make so many of those, but we did produce lots of three-foot-long, eight-inch-diameter sticks. Now, generally, they are much smaller.”

Most dynamites today range from one to four inches in diameter and from eight to twenty-four inches in length, and differ greatly in density and strength. But stronger is not necessarily better. High-strength explosives are useful for extremely hard rock and for certain deep oil-well and seismic operations. If, however, a blaster is trying to create material for lining a river or building a breakwater, he wants the large hunks of rock known as riprap, not billions of pebbles that would be swept away by currents, so a less powerful dynamite is needed. Perhaps the best example of energy-specific blasting is the formation of highway roadcuts, in which a relatively low-strength explosive is used to push unneeded rock toward the roadbed, allowing relatively intact sheer wall to remain—a blasting operation similar to chiselling and known as pre-splitting. (The remains of pre-splitting boreholes are visible as long, thin, close-set lines running the vertical length of roadcut walls.)

A dynamite's strength and its water resistance are determined by the dopes—the particular dry ingredients that are combined with the nitroglycerin. Some, antacids such as calcium carbonate, increase dynamite's stability in storage; others, such as wood or nut pulp, are primarily absorbents, like Nobel's kieselguhr. The two most important dry ingredients are ammonium nitrate and nitrocellulose, both of which substitute for varying proportions of nitroglycerin. Ammonium nitrate, which is cheaper than nitroglycerin and less sensitive to shock and friction, is used in nearly all dynamites today. In general, the more ammo-

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nium nitrate a dynamite contains, the less powerful, the less water-resistant, and the less costly it is. The addition of nitrocellulose, which looks like upholstery stuffing, turns a dynamite gelatinous, with a consistency ranging from grainy peanut butter to well-chewed gum, and increases the explosive's water resistance.

Best and I walked through the dope house, a dusty brick building that resembled a small grain elevator. The dopes were stored in upper-floor bins. After passing through a fine-mesh screen and a magnetic field to cull impurities, they would be loaded into three-wheeled, chest-high wooden hods. A worker was rolling loaded hods onto narrow-gauge flatbed railcars. Stopping along the way at a separate building for ammonium nitrate and nitrocellulose, the train would travel several hundred yards to the mix house, where the dopes would be combined with nitroglycerin.

Sulfuric acid and nitric acid were being pumped across the plant grounds from the acid works—a sinister, steam-spouting collection of tall tanks and pipes that looked like a gnomish petroleum refinery—to the nitrating house, a four-story wooden building with an exposed staircase, a revolving red warning light, a steaming chimney pipe, and a lightning rod. Painted bright yellow, the nitrating house was perched on the bench of a small hillside. It looked like Mother Goose's house on the outside and a chemistry lab within—humming, unpeopled, uncluttered stainless-steel efficiency.

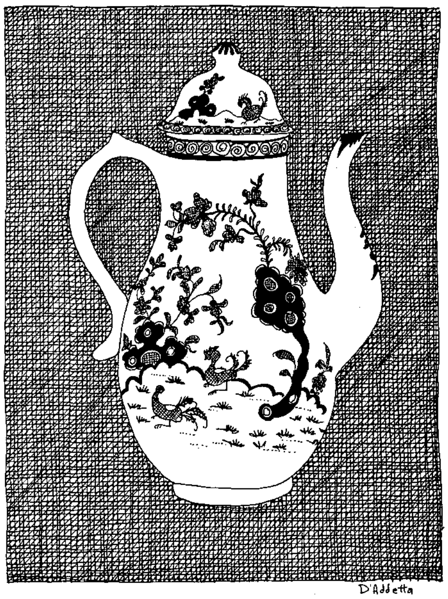
In the early days of nitroglycerin manufacture, nitrating houses were extremely dangerous places, where nitroglycerin was manufactured under the most primitive conditions, as this description of a typical operation in the eighteen-eighties suggests:

> Water from a small stream could be run through a wooden trough in the center of the shed. The trough held ten five-gallon crocks of earthenware, in each of which about forty pounds of mixed acid were placed. At the side of each crock stood a pitcher with five pounds of glycerin. The operator passed from one crock to another, pouring a little glycerin into each, and stirring with a stick until he came to the end of the line, when he would start again at the beginning, thus giving each crock a chance to cool off between additions of the glycerin. When the glycerin was all used, the contents of the crocks were poured into a large tub of water while a second man stirred vigorously with a wooden paddle.

And that wasn't the worst. Moonlighters hung out at the early job sites, mixing nitroglycerin in small batches under cover of darkness and selling it, cheaper than the big guys, from carts. Cash on the barrelhead, and no questions asked.

At Bessemer, the operation was rapid, seemingly safe, and proprietal. Glycerin and ethylene glycol dinitrate were combined with the acids in a temperature-controlled vessel on the top floor of the nitrating house. This mixture flowed down pipes into a stainless-steel tank, where the spent acids separated from the newly created nitroglycerin. The spent acids went off for another round of retrieval, while the nitroglycerin was washed in a soda-ash water bath to remove any acid traces. Then it flowed down a long plastic pipeline, first to large underground storage tanks and then to the mix house. Operators controlled the whole process from a nearby bunker. If the slightest irregularity were to show up on their battery of dials and gauges, they would switch on flapper valves to drown the entire batch in tubs of cold water. In the feckless early days, the nitroglycerin would make the journey to the mix house in canisters suspended from yokes carried by workers, or along a wooden track in rubber-wheeled carts appropriately named angel buggies.

The dry ingredients and the nitroglycerin would become dynamite in the mix house, a sturdy, unassuming-looking three-story building that housed, on its second floor, a large bronze cylinder called a Talley bowl. The blending operation was simplicity itself. A pair of wide bronze spiral stirrers mixed the dopes into the nitroglycerin. The blades churned for between three and five minutes, and dynamite was the result. A worker would then load the dynamite into hods, to be taken by battery-powered train to the packing houses, where a variety of machines—loud wooden contraptions that looked like player pianos turned inside out—would pack it into its paper cartridges.



Long after I had left Alabama and the Bessemer plant, that mix house haunted me. Its interior—with its spacious, uncluttered floors, white, bare walls, and near-absence of moving parts—seemed some perversion of a bakery. Perhaps it was the smell of the place—the nitrate dust turned the air into an overpowering swirl of scraping ammonia fumes. But these were gentle compared with the effects of nitroglycerin. The oil is a vasodilator, and the same qualities that make it excellent for temporarily opening clogged arteries play hob with a healthy person's respiratory system. Ten minutes after entering the mix house, my head was pounding, my eyes were bloodshot and watering, and my sinus passages were in extremis. I told Richard Best I had to leave. The day-shift mix-house operator smiled and asked me how I felt. "Like the top of my head's going to blow off," I answered, with a turn of phrase that was no doubt evidence of my disturbed condition. I tried again. "Like someone poisoned me. How do you stand it?" He shook his head. "I don't notice things much around here anymore," he said, as Best and I made our escape.

Signs were scattered all around the grounds, each a reminder of where a person was, and what sort of behavior would be most appropriate toward the goal of remaining alive. Slogans lined the narrow, twisting, tree-bordered road from the kiosk to the head offices: "The Best Safety Device Is a Careful Man" and (just above a small metal box on a stanchion) "Leave Lighters and Matches Here;" occupancy limits were posted inside each building along the powder line ("Operators—3, Transients—2"); in the lunchroom, a plain cinder-block rectangle with a communal cigarette lighter of the sort found on automobile dashboards, the signs read "Follow Through for Safety" and "Second Thoughts Are Ever Wiser—Euripides." But in a dynamite factory signs are not nearly enough to guarantee safety.

Intense heat or a strong shock can detonate nitroglycerin. While the matches that the security guard took from me, or the cigarette that I might light with them, would not necessarily

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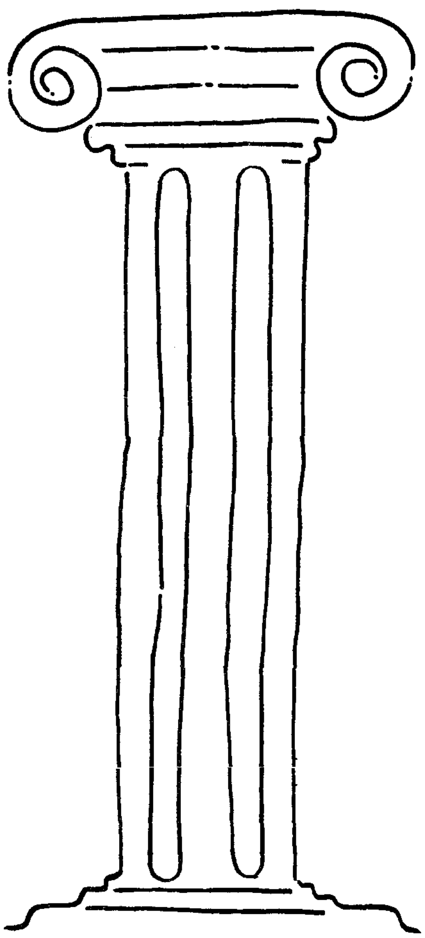

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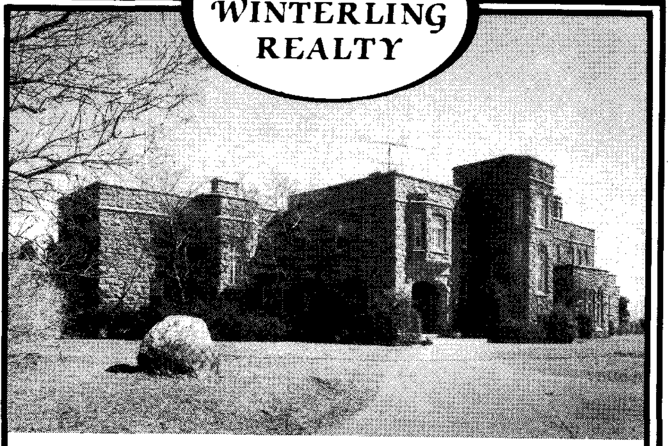

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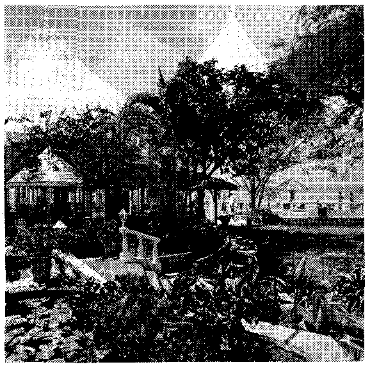


CORAL REEF CLUB

set off an explosion, any fire resulting from carelessness with such articles would be disastrous. Most metal along the powder line was of the non-sparking variety, and so was all metal that came into contact with explosive ingredients. Whenever possible, machines and tools were of wood or were rubber-covered. Switches and electric motors were placed outside a building's windows. In the rooms where the dynamite was packed, the light fixtures were cool fluorescent and had special rubber gaskets. All buildings at Bessemer were fitted with lightning rods, though the wisdom of this practice is debated within the industry; many argue that the rods tend to attract lightning. Electrical storms were tracked. When one approached, all operations were shut down, and the workers were sent to the lunchroom.

If any impurity were to fall into a batch of explosives along the powder line (workers call these impurities "buggers"), it might spark, or get caught in the blades of the Talley bowl, where it could cause sudden pressure and an explosion. To prevent this from happening, the workers at Bessemer wore company-issued pocketless, cuffless coveralls, to prevent them from carrying any tools that could fall into machinery or powder batches, and also to prevent any powder from collecting in the uniforms. Ridge-soled shoes were forbidden in the packing houses. In addition, workers stored all jewelry, knives, key chains, and the like in lockers before they went to work. Both IRECO safety personnel and the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) conducted regular plant inspections, and these were not limited to checks of equipment and operating procedures. "We make periodic employee searches," Best said. "For one personal-effects violation, you lose anything from two days' to two weeks' work. After the second offense, you are fired. We don't hesitate to do so."

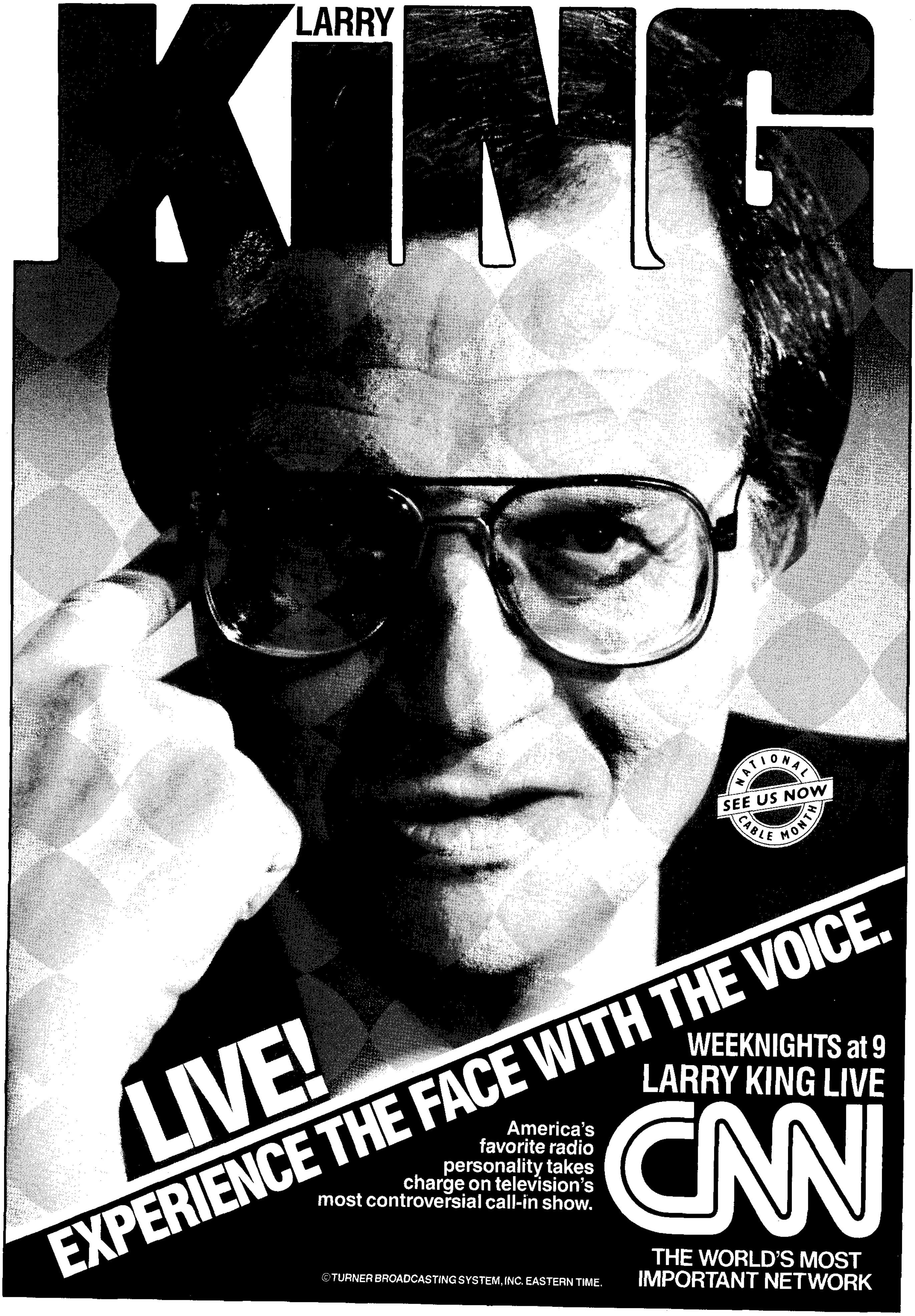
In general, this attention to detail has succeeded. Explosives-manufacturing plants are relatively safe places to work. In 1984, according to the latest figures of the Institute of Makers of Explosives, a Washington-based trade organization, I.M.E. members—which include all major explosives manufacturers in North America—had an occupational-injury-and-illness rate twenty-seven per cent lower than the average of all industries surveyed by the National Safety Council. Marlen Whippen, a staff engineer at Bessemer, like many explosives workers, is tired of the bad reputation he feels the industry has. According to Whippen, the problem is one of grave misperception. "You know, hardly any industry can hold a candle to our safety record here—not Pullman Standard"—which used to have a large railroad-boxcar manufacturing plant in Bessemer—"not the auto industry, not the steel industry, not the coal industry," he told me. "It's just that the few incidents we do have make front-page news. Incidents at a steel mill or a Burger King get buried on page ten, next to the Alka-Seltzer ads."

The explosives industry's suspicion of the press is nothing new. The Hagley Museum, beside Brandywine Creek, near Wilmington, Delaware, the site of the first black-powder mills of the Du Pont company, contains several huge scrapbooks of magazine and newspaper explosives miscellany, part of the largest collection of explosives literature in America. These scrapbooks present a picture of reporters running gleefully to cover an explosion—any explosion—but they also suggest that there were plenty of explosions to run toward. The headlines are graphic: "A WOMAN WAS BLOWN TO PIECES," "ONE MAN WIPED OUT OF EXISTENCE," "MEN ARE BLOWN TO ATOMS IN A POWDER MILL," "FRAGMENTS OF BODIES FOUND IN TREE TRUNKS," "BLEW HIS HEAD 100 FEET." Dozens of headlines use the term "missing" instead of "killed," and with good reason, as the Grant County, Wisconsin, *Witness* explains in a February 28, 1900, report of a plant explosion:

> As is usual with the explosions which occur in powder mills, and which have occurred here, now the eighth time, no reason has been assigned, neither is any reason looked for. Nothing is ever left to even give a clew of how they occur.

Many of these early incidents were caused, undoubtedly, by improper temperature control during nitration, or a spill from an angel buggy, or a general lack of attention to safe working conditions, as well as a very feeble idea of what constituted safety in the first place. The officials of a California plant that blew up in 1880 were censured by the coroner for, among other things, letting "Mongolians" (Chinese) and Caucasians work together. But accidents are by no means a thing of the past.

"We had an incident at the mix



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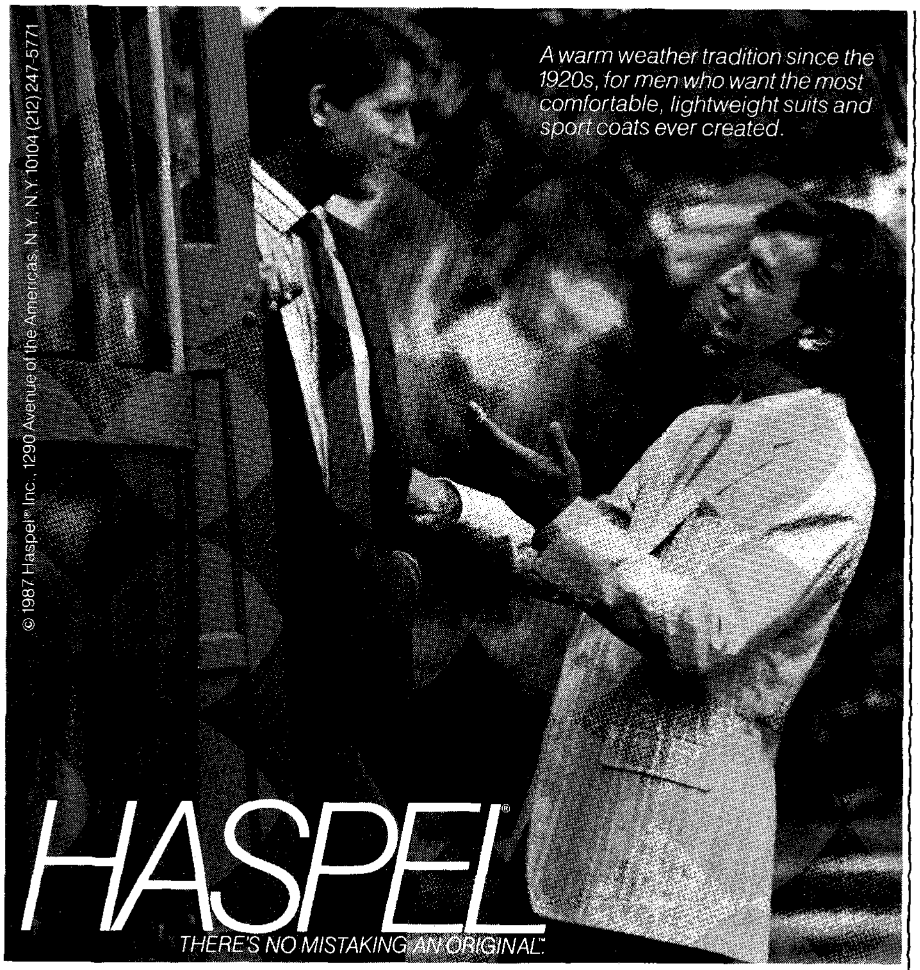
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house in 1979," Richard Best told me. "It was a rainy evening, Halloween, 7 P.M., and something like sixteen hundred pounds went up in the mix house. One person was killed. We closed for a week and a half. There was no other damage, really, but everything had to be checked, in case equipment had got out of alignment. What happened to the building? You have the equivalent of a small four-bedroom, three-story house, and what you end up with is a basement. OSHA came by. They never found out what happened. Neither did we. Maybe it was lightning, but I doubt it. That's one reason we have safety audits by outside people. You come in for the first time, and you see everything with new eyes. We have a video monitor in the corner of the mix house now. If there's another incident, maybe it will give us a clue."

I asked Marlen Whippen about that blast. "The amazing thing was this: Where did it all go?" he said. "There were hunks of metal, lots of wood parts, but not much else. Just where?"

Some aspects of explosions evidently never change. The inventor and explosives entrepreneur Hudson Maxim, in a collection of anecdotes entitled "Dynamite Stories," published in 1916, tells of visiting a powder plant just after an explosion in which two employees were killed. He watched as the plant's foreman wandered around in the rubble, searching for the remains. The foreman was talking to himself. "I can't find much of the boys," he muttered. "I guess you'll have to plow the ground if you want to bury them."

—BRYAN DI SALVATORE

(*This is the first part of a two-part article.*)

•

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

[*From the Chattanooga Times*]

Griscom said he couldn't discuss the plans, but called them also "nothing out of the ordinary."

"All we're doing is taking the agenda that's out there and maybe putting it under a different umbrella. That's not meaning that you drop pieces of it out, but maybe just refocus it a little bit so that you're driving more toward specific areas than a lot of piecemeal things," Griscom said.

•

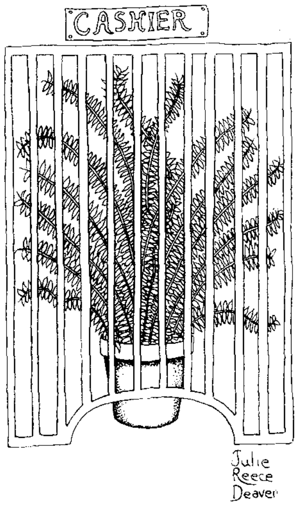
George and Ira Gershwin said it all: "I'll take Manhattan."—*Manhattan Living.*

Well, Rodgers and Hart said some of it.

THE THEATRE

Old Man

IN “A Month of Sundays,” briefly at the Ritz, Jason Robards appeared as an old man in a retirement home who is possessed, as someone says, of “a mordant wit”—a wit that he exercises on a nurse, a cleaning woman, another old man (his crony and chess partner), and, when they are not around, the audience. The show could be considered a kind of monologue with interruptions. The other interrupters are his daughter and son-in-law, who on the first Sunday of every month pay him a visit that is so uncomfortable all around that there isn't much chance for mordancy. The old fellow, whose name is Cooper, is funny some of the time, but mostly he's not. And one is always aware that underneath the badinage are his loneliness and fear.



“A Month of Sundays” was written by the English dramatist Bob Larbey, and has been a hit in London; although the location was changed to Westchester County, the locutions were not. The lines and jokes still had a British ring to them, to say nothing of the incessant references to the bladder. Cooper, a man whose mind is as sharp as ever, is being constantly betrayed by his body, but enough is enough. His crony, Aylott, on the other hand, has become increasingly forgetful, and both men keep testing themselves by trying to name the members of a pennant-winning Giants team; eight out of nine is the best they can ever do. As Aylott, both amusing and rattled, Salem Ludwig was always believable. As the cleaning woman, Lynne Thigpen made her scenes with Cooper the liveliest in the show. I also enjoyed Felicity LaFortune as a sympathetic nurse; she is called, by the way, Nurse Wilson. In *Westchester County*? As for Mr. Robards, yes and no. He did not seem at ease in the role, at least at the preview I saw. His timing frequently seemed off, maybe because the dispensing of one-liners (mordant or mild) is not his métier. “A Month of Sundays” is not a play at all but a vehicle concocted to display a star, and that is not Mr. Robards' style. Cooper's spacious and lavish room, where the action takes place, was designed by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg and lighted by Tharon Musser; costumes by Joseph G. Aulisi. Gene Saks directed.

Alfred Uhry's “Driving Miss Daisy,” at Playwrights Horizons, records, in a series of short scenes, the growing attachment of a cranky old Jewish woman in Atlanta (as portrayed by the sterling Dana Ivey) to her black chauffeur (as portrayed by the splendid Morgan Freeman). At the beginning, we hear a crash offstage: Miss Daisy has again demolished a new Packard. The year is 1948; she is seventy-two, and her son, a local businessman, has decided that she must have a driver. Her resistance is stubborn—she is used to doing for herself; people will find out that she is rich—but to no avail. He hires Hoke, who, though infinitely adaptable, turns out to be just as tough as she is. Her affection for him, nonexistent at first, increases with the years (and the progression of cars), and in the final scene, in which he, now grown old himself, visits her at a nursing home (I guess) in 1973, we realize that they have almost become a couple. The scenes are, as I say, brief, but each makes its point. The funniest are those in which Miss Daisy comments on the social pretensions of her daughter-in-law, who is much given to elaborate Christmas decorations and Christmas parties, and the strongest are those in which we see Hoke's strength. When Miss Daisy invites him, at the last minute, to a banquet in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., he turns her down, because the invitation has been in her house for a month. Her son has also turned her down, because he fears his presence there would be bad for business. On the side, Mr. Uhry has interesting things to tell us about the position of a prosperous Jewish family in a Southern city. The play is more a sentimental than a dramatic occasion, but in spite of some poor moments it has a certain charm of time and place and people. The acting, under Ron Lagomarsino's deft direction, is very good. Mr. Freeman gives depth to what is essentially a shallow role, and his subtle aging is particularly impressive. Ray Gill does well as the son. Commendable scenery, lighting, and costumes by Thomas Lynch, Ken Tabachnick, and Michael Krass, respectively.

THE best news of the week—of any week, I guess—is that Bill Irwin, aged thirty-seven, the inspired clown, dancer, juggler, acrobat, pantomimist, and actor, is back in town with his gifted partners Doug Skinner and M. C. O'Connor, and that, most unexpectedly, his “The Regard of Flight” seems at home in the enormous Beaumont, at Lincoln Center. When I first reviewed it, five years ago, at the little theatre at the American Place, it seemed to me the funniest and most imaginative show on earth. It still does. I remember being surprised then that the words Mr. Irwin spoke were as eloquent and comical as his face and body. To repeat my original view: “The theme, in a manner of speaking, is New Theatre (as opposed to traditional theatre), and Mr. Irwin tosses its catch phrases and cant into the air as nimbly as he juggles his hat and cane. From the opening, where Mr. Irwin is discovered in bed, wearing a red-and-white striped nightcap and nightshirt, the effect of ‘The Regard of Flight’ is kaleidoscopic, with parody following parody, and every kind of joke—sight and sound—flashing by . . . There is plenty of Mr. Irwin's sublime silent comedy, surely inspired by Buster Keaton, and, above all, of his humorous, poetic, acrobatic dancing and stunts.” The show seems even more marvellous, and funnier, now, with many new treasures, or perhaps treasures that were hidden the first time. It will remain at the Beaumont only through April 26th.

—Edith Oliver

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HOW'S THAT AGAIN? DEPARTMENT

[*From the Vancouver* (*B.C.*) *Sun*]

A Canadian going into the U.S. on business with an empty car and requiring no commercial processing by customs will still be charged because he's driving what is classed as a commercial vehicle, Payne said.

“It has to be that way to make it equitable, if not fair,” he said.

AROUND CITY HALL

WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR?

DESCRIBING the moments after Marvelous Marvin Hagler's recent upset defeat by Sugar Ray Leonard in the match for the middleweight championship at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Joe Gergen wrote in his *Newsday* sports column, "You never saw so many dumbstruck people in one arena." It was another reminder that, in their reaction to sports, Americans often demonstrate a sharp and enduring capacity for surprise or outrage—residents of St. Louis are still said to be ready to punch out defenders of an umpire's decision in the sixth game of the 1985 World Series which, in their view, robbed the Cardinals of the Series victory—which is not matched by their response to events in some other spheres, including politics and government. Many followers of the latest news from Washington, for example, no longer seem stunned by new revelations about Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North's clandestine military-supply operations that only a short while ago would have shaken them deeply. Most United States senators who were present at a committee hearing this month on the nomination of William Webster, the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as director of the Central Intelligence Agency did not rise up in anger when Webster told them that after he learned last October that the Justice Department suspected that North might be the subject of prosecution because of his role in supplying arms to the Nicaraguan Contras he told nobody and simply forgot about it.

In testimony on a matter of particular interest to New Yorkers, Webster offered no excuse for another lapse: the F.B.I.'s failure to mention during the 1981 confirmation hearings of Raymond Donovan that the F.B.I. had evidence suggesting that his company was involved with organized-crime figures. Donovan, who was then the executive vice-president and part owner of the Schiavone Construction Company, had been the major Northeastern fund-raiser in the 1980 Reagan campaign, and the President had rewarded him with a nomination as Secretary of Labor. In October of 1984, he became the only incumbent American Cabinet member to be criminally indicted, and he is currently on trial in the Bronx County Courthouse, accused of having participated, in his pre-Cabinet days, in a criminal scheme to defraud the New York City Transit Authority of seven and a half million dollars in connection with a contract to build the East Sixty-third Street subway tunnel under the East River. His fellow-defendants include Bronx State Senator Joseph Galiber, until recently a member of the State Senate Ethics Committee; seven executives of the Schiavone company; and Willie (the Butcher) Masselli, whom the F.B.I. has identified as an associate of the Genovese organized-crime family. With some nudging from New York senators, Webster may be asked to refresh his recollection of the Donovan matter. Bronx District Attorney Mario Merola has said that he moved with special vigor to secure an indictment in the Donovan case after the body of a witness who had agreed to testify for a Justice Department special prosecutor was found "almost in front of my house." When Donovan called the indictment politically motivated—he is a Republican and Merola a Democrat—the District Attorney said, "Homicide is not political." Feelings of outrage may fade faster in politics than in some other fields (Richard Nixon, whose office is in Foley Square, just north of City Hall, is a welcome—often, indeed, honored—guest at many local events), but nothing concentrates a prosecutor's attention more than having a body dumped almost in front of his house.

On the municipal-corruption scene, the investigations, sudden resignations, and indictments of longtime City Hall regulars continue apace. Possibly because the list of them is now so long, local public reaction to the addition of a new name to the roster tends to be relatively muted. The Mayor goes right on insisting that whatever happened was not his fault or, alternatively, that there was nothing he could have done to prevent it, since, as he puts it, "there has been corruption since Adam and Eve and the two apes that came before them." Every day or so, he says that the most important thing about the scandals is that they must not be allowed to interfere with getting on with the business of government—a line also often heard these days in Washington. Critics of Ronald Reagan have complained that, unlike other Presidents, he is given credit for getting through a press conference without making more than two or three certifiable misstatements or falling down at the podium. New York's Mayor, in *his* time of troubles, is given credit for getting through the latest indictment of some former close associate without himself being charged with anything—except, perhaps, with having been spectacularly inattentive ("How the hell could I know?" is a favorite mayoral line) to what was going on in the government of which he is the elected leader.

Eve Olitsky

Early this month, Koch expressed gratification on hearing that United States Attorney Rudolph Giuliani, the prosecutor for the federal district that includes Manhattan and the Bronx, had said in a question-and-answer session after a speech that there was not a "shred of evidence" that the Mayor "knew of crimes that were being committed by several of the Democratic leaders and the borough presidents or had any involvement in those crimes." Koch did not quote Giuliani's opinion, expressed at the same time, that whether the city had been managed prudently and whether Koch had properly insured that there were safeguards against corruption were "legitimate questions" that the prosecutor could not answer—just as, Giuliani said, one might ask the President of the United States questions like "What was going on in the basement of the White House, and should you have known about it, and aren't you accountable for it?"

THE response of many New Yorkers to the local scandals is in many respects more depressing than noisy demonstrations of outrage would be. There is a kind of resigned acceptance that their government has been operating in what *Daily News* editorials frequently describe as a "culture of corruption," and that, no doubt, there is plenty of bad news to come. The sense that this is the way it is has become a routine element of local discourse, a grimly jocular reference in and out of City Hall.

"From here it looks like liver and onions."

During the first 1987 home game of the Yankees, otherwise known as the Bronx Bombers, on April 13th, when Bronx State Assemblyman José Serrano didn't like an umpire's call he shouted from his stadium seat, "Indict the ump!" As Bronx Borough President, Stanley Simon was widely believed to see as his primary responsibility doing the bidding of his clubhouse mentor, the Bronx Democratic boss, Stanley Friedman, who last month was sentenced to twelve years in federal prison after his conviction for converting the city's Parking Violations Bureau into a racketeering operation for his own financial benefit. Friedman was one of the closest allies of the Mayor, who apparently did not know, as many others did, that Friedman had had a sign on his office wall saying "Crime Doesn't Pay—As Well As Politics." Borough President Simon commented in late February, "It would be a miracle if I wasn't indicted." That same month, Art Buchwald, delivering a speech here before a business group, took note of the fact that most officials involved in the Parking Violations Bureau scandal—including former Queens Borough President Donald Manes and former Department of Transportation Commissioner Michael Lazar—were from Queens. "I was raised in Queens, but I had nothing to do with the Parking Violations Bureau," said Buchwald. "I'm the only one in the borough who didn't." He added, "This is not a good time for political humorists, because government is far funnier."

The high crime rate among local politicians has been mockingly cited in discussions of two of the critical local problems that the Mayor surely had in mind when he referred to the need to get on with the business of government: what to do about the city's rising jail population—at nearly fifteen thousand, it is more than twice as high as it was when Koch took office, and requires about a thousand more beds than the city's official prison capacity—and where to put the city's homeless. Just those living in the city's shelters and hotels for homeless families now number more than twenty-eight thousand, or twelve times the total at the beginning of the decade. One City Hall solution for the excess-prisoners crisis has been to fit out former Staten Island ferryboats as jails. The first such "floating jail dormitory," as a Koch press release called it, was dedicated last month off Riker's Island, the city's main jail facility. Most of the onetime city officials so far convicted have been tried in federal courts and will go to federal prisons. However, John McLaughlin, the former head of the Koch administration's two-billion-dollar-a-year Health and Hospitals Corporation, was convicted in a state court of misuse of private funds and misstatement of his holdings on city financial-disclosure statements, and would normally serve his six-months sentence on Riker's Island. Since the floating jails are intended for convicts who are not likely to try to shoot their way out, McLaughlin might possibly end up in one of them. In a letter to the *News* this winter, a Brooklyn resident who signed himself R. Ryan wrote, "May I suggest that the Mayor's proposed fleet of prison ships be named after departing members of his administration as they are indicted or plead the Fifth? Thus we would house, or berth, our petty criminals on ferryboats renamed the Friedman, the Lazar, and the Myerson. The onshore prisons could, in turn, be converted to condominiums."

The last line of the letter was taken as a reference to the belief, held by critics of the Koch administration, that the blame for the plight of many of the local homeless should be laid at the door of City Hall because of its granting of tax abatements and other indulgences that encourage real-estate developers to tear down low-income and single-room-occupancy facilities and replace them with luxury housing. The Mayor's office is now said to be working on a program to fit out other vessels with beds for the homeless. In a further extension of its involvement with waterborne accommodations, the city is having four oceangoing barges built so that it can comply with regulations of the federal Environmental Protection Agency. By the end of this year, New York must stop dumping its daily tons of sewage sludge twelve miles off the Atlantic coast and dump it instead a hundred and six miles out to sea. Although, according to present plans, the prison ships and the floating dormitories for New Yorkers who have no other place to live would lie at anchor, they would be to some degree seaworthy. The prospect thus looms that at some point vessels sailing under the city flag with their sad human cargoes might be plying the waters around what Woody Guthrie once called "the New York island," possibly encountering in their

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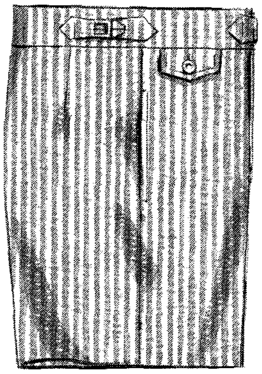

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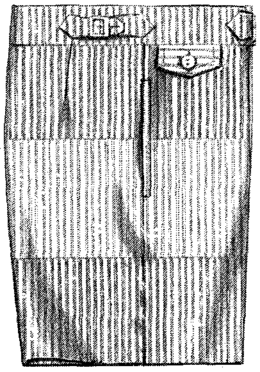

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A REFERENCE to the crime rate among local politicians came up in a letter to the Mayor last month from Robert Hayes, the head of the Coalition for the Homeless, concerning City Hall's encouraging police officers to conduct arrest sweeps at local bus and railway stations, where many of the homeless live in preference to going to the city shelters, some of which have as many as twelve hundred people sleeping in one room. The claim of those who opt for the terminals is that they are safer than the city shelters, which they consider to be frightening and dangerous—a claim that makes the Mayor very angry. Hayes complained that the arrests—mostly for criminal trespass—constituted "quasi-military operations against our feeblest citizens," and that the charges were "equivalent to being guilty of homelessness." A former attorney with the downtown law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell, Hayes started working with the homeless in his spare time in the late nineteen-seventies; he left the firm in 1981, shortly after founding the coalition, which is now a national organization. The Mayor frequently points out that the city never turns a homeless person away, but it was suits brought by the coalition that guaranteed the homeless this right to basic shelter and certain amenities such as a shower for every forty persons. The curious effect of last month's arrest sweeps was that, faced with not having enough space for the homeless and enough space in its jails, City Hall seemed to be intent on arresting homeless individuals not in the shelters and sending them to the jails. In a March 13th letter, Hayes urged the Mayor to halt what he called "the reign of terror," and quoted from a November, 1986, report of the inspector general of Koch's own Human Resources Administration, which is responsible for the homeless. The report had listed the murders, assaults, and robberies that had taken place in the huge shelter systems and had concluded that they were "unsafe for both residents and staff." (The Human Resources Administration did not release this report with its unwelcome conclusions, but it nevertheless found its way into the papers.)

In that same letter, Hayes accused the Mayor of continuing "to prance about claiming the shelters are safe." In an apparent effort to prove that the police sweeps were intended to protect the homeless from themselves, Koch, who has expressed distress over the rising crime rate here and the burden it places on the city's criminal-justice system, asked his criminal-justice coördinator to look at the rap sheets—records of previous arrests—for the homeless persons arrested in the sweeps in a designated period. A summary of the sheets, which the Mayor did find worth releasing to the press, showed that, while twenty-four of the twenty-five arrested on two nights had previously been arrested, almost all of the new charges involved nothing more serious than criminal trespass, or, in Hayes' judgment, the crime of being homeless. In another letter to Koch, on March 20th, Hayes pointed out that the Mayor had failed to note that virtually all the charges were ultimately dismissed by the courts. Hayes added slyly, "I'm sure you would not welcome police raids at political meetings based on past infractions by public officials."

SO far as is known, the only invitational event ever attended by President Reagan, Mayor Koch, and the Bronx boss Stanley Friedman—who was referred to in a *Newsday* editorial as "Friedman the felon," to distinguish him from his handpicked successor as Bronx Democratic chairman, a state assemblyman who, by coincidence, is also named Friedman—was a gathering on the lawn at Gracie Mansion on Labor Day of 1981. It was held in celebration of the delivery to the Mayor of a two-by-four-foot mockup of an eighty-five-million-dollar federal check for property along the right-of-way of the proposed—later cancelled—billion-dollar Westway road, on the West Side of Manhattan. The majordomo for the affair was Secretary of Labor Donovan. He even provided a human prop of sorts—a black construction worker with whom the President was said to have had a streetside encounter during a previous visit to the city. The worker had not been very hard to find; providentially, he had turned out to be an employee of Donovan's old company, Schiavone. Standing with the black worker, Koch, and Donovan, all of them wearing hard hats, the President said he remembered the encounter well. Donovan and Friedman were not the only guests that day for whom a bad time in the criminal courts lay ahead. Also present were a considerable number of the twenty-one figures the *News* described last month as "present or former government and political officials convicted, charged, or otherwise linked to the city corruption scandal" and pictured in a kind of rogues' gallery under the headline "THE ROLL OF DISHONOR." Standing on the lawn at Gracie Mansion, Friedman was asked by a reporter about the obvious rapport between the Democratic Mayor and the Republican President, which, the *Post* noted later that week, they had "demonstrated fulsomely"—a comment that the *Post*, a strong supporter of both Koch and the President, did not intend as a negative one. "The first thing you have to remember about the Mayor," said Friedman, then Koch's esteemed friend, who is now referred to at City Hall only in tones of loathing, "is that he likes to be with winners."

In recent months, it seems that there have been far more losers than winners among the people around the Mayor. On April Fool's Day, former Bronx Borough President Simon, who had resigned three weeks earlier, was indicted (there was no miracle) by a federal grand jury, accused of extortion, perjury, tax evasion, and obstruction of justice in connection with the shaking down of a city employee and officials of Wedtech, a South Bronx military contractor. On the day the Yankees played their first game of the season here, Sam Roberts wrote in his urban-affairs column in the *Times*, "In the Yankees' home borough of the Bronx, where political scandal has become the predominant sport this year, the Borough President was thrown out before the first ball." On March 16th, Bronx Representative Mario Biaggi—like Simon, a close political ally of the Mayor's—and the former Brooklyn Democratic boss Meade Esposito were indicted on charges of conspiracy, bribery, and "travel in the aid of racketeering" associated with a scheme to win Navy contracts and favorable city leases for a Brooklyn ship-repair company that owed Esposito's insurance company large sums of money. In his political memoirs, Koch has written of a pilgrimage he made to Brooklyn during his first mayoral campaign, in 1977, in a successful effort to persuade the clubhouse boss Esposito to support him, and of how they agreed that there would be no public acknowledgment of their cozy new alliance, since Koch was running on an anti-boss platform. It was no surprise that Esposito's later requests to the new mayor to hire or promote a number of Esposito protégés did not fall on deaf ears. One Esposito friend was Anthony Ameruso, whom Koch named as head of his Department of Transportation. (As Esposito has explained it, he told Koch, "He's my guy, he's a good man.") Ameruso is now under indictment for perjury, accused of having lied in connection with the letting of a city ferry contract. The most recent departure under fire from City Hall was that of Bess Myerson, who resigned as Cultural Affairs Commissioner on April 9th. In honor of her having been the first Miss America from this state (and the first Jewish Miss America), the *Newsday* front-page headline that day was "THERE SHE GOES . . ."

When the trials of Stanley Friedman and his co-defendants, who were eventually convicted of having fraudulently secured a nearly twenty-three-million-dollar contract with the city, began last September, in federal court in New Haven, some day-trippers from New York—both public officials and reporters—were taken aback to discover that quite a few members of the Connecticut jury panel had never heard of Friedman, his fellow-defendants, or his clubhouse pals. Yet it was these people who, with the coöperation of the Mayor, to whom they were very helpful at election time, had been allowed to wield immense power over the city government. For that matter, before the scandals even many New Yorkers had never heard of Friedman and his partners in corruption. They did not, for example, know how to pronounce the name of Donald Manes (it rhymes with "Janice"), whose first suicide attempt, in January of 1986 (the second attempt, two months later, was successful), was the first signal to many New Yorkers that something was terribly wrong with the way the city was being run. With the recent indictment of Biaggi and the resignation of Bess Myerson, it has become much harder for the Mayor, whose own name and face are easily identifiable not only here but in many other parts of the country, to suggest that whatever went wrong can be dismissed as having to do with minor municipal types (to some minds, the word "municipal" is almost dismissive in itself), whose names weren't worth trying to sort out—people he himself scarcely knew. Then came the charges against Biaggi. Mark Twain may have defined members of Congress as America's only native criminal class, but indictments of members of the House of Representatives are not as frequent as he doubtless thought appropriate. Biaggi's indictment was front-page news in many papers all over America.

LAMP SHADES

As for Bess Myerson, except, perhaps, to Americans under thirty, she is a bona-fide national celebrity, and the Mayor is certainly not in a position to say that he hardly knew her. For seventeen years, on such programs as "The Big Payoff" and "I've Got a Secret," she was a television personality before there were so many of them to keep track of. In 1969, Mayor John Lindsay named her commissioner of the city's Consumer Affairs Department. Several years earlier, she had met Koch, then an obscure city councilman, and her part in his later rise to political power was substantial. David Garth, the media adviser who ran Koch's first mayoral campaign, in 1977, has said of that race, "Without her, we would probably not have won." He was terrified of rumors that the bachelor candidate was homosexual. (There is no solid evidence of the Mayor's having had any passion in life other than politics.) Simple denials are

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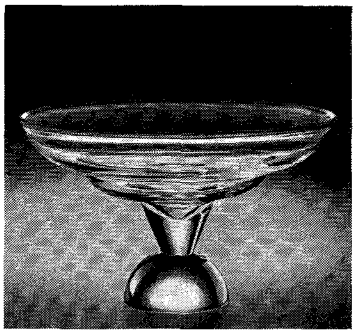

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not the answer in such cases. (In 1982, when Koch was running for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination against Mario Cuomo, an upstate paper ran the headline "KOCH NOT GAY," which all agreed did not improve the situation.) Garth had Koch announce his candidacy for mayor in 1977 with Bess—a friend of both—standing next to him, and saw to it that she rarely left Koch's side till the campaign was over. New Yorkers, like folks elsewhere, enjoy a nice romance, and the campaign obliged them. As the candidate and his lovely companion moved through the streets, they constantly held hands. To shouts of "When are you getting married?" one or the other of them would say "Soon!" or "Just wait and see!" Sometimes they would give each other a big kiss for the photographers. In reality, there was no romance. After Koch took office, her role at City Hall was only ceremonial, although the ceremonies were not always minor ones: she held the Bible as he took the oath of office at each of his three inaugurations. She had wanted to serve in his administration, but, for five years, no post was offered. Then, in February of 1983, she suddenly became highly valuable to him once more in a familiar diversionary role—or so it appeared. At a public City Council hearing on the Gay Rights Bill, an orthodox rabbi testifying against the bill, which Koch supported, said that "this evil man, Edward I. Koch" did not need legal permission to join a certain male city official, whom the rabbi named, "in his Greenwich Village apartment." The next day, Koch and his old friend Bess were smiling, side-by-side figures again at a press conference. He had appointed her the head of his Cultural Affairs Department, the post she resigned this month.

Since early last year, Carl (Andy) Capasso, the head of a local construction company, has been the target of a federal-grand-jury investigation. For the past seven years, he has been, depending on what newspaper one reads, the sixty-two-year-old Miss Myerson's boyfriend, regular companion, or lover; in the divorce proceedings between him and his wife, which began in 1983, the formal term was corespondent. Understandably, few commentators can resist pointing out, in marvelling tones, that Capasso was born the year she won the Miss America contest. The most frequently published picture of the two together shows them conferring earnestly in the portico of City Hall. Among the questions the grand jury is said to be studying is whether she was helpful in winning for his company any of a hundred and fifty million dollars' worth of city contracts he has been awarded in recent years. Last year, the Mayor, who had lunched at Capasso's house in the Hamptons with the couple (who were first introduced by Donald Manes) denounced reporters' questions about her possible helpfulness as "McCarthyism." A few weeks ago, Miss Myerson called any such implications "municipal McCarthyism."

On January 9th, the Mayor learned that, without informing him, she had pleaded the Fifth Amendment in December before the grand jury looking into Capasso's affairs. At his request, she agreed to take a ninety-day leave of absence from her Cultural Affairs post while a special counsel—the former federal judge Harold Tyler was eventually chosen—considered the situation. At the time, she said that she would coöperate fully in this inquiry, but, in fact, she declined to do so without a grant of immunity. Tyler's report, delivered to the Mayor on the afternoon of April 8th, was not publicly released. Instead, a hundred-and-fifty-six-word summary from the Mayor's office stated that Tyler had found her guilty of "improprieties" in using city employees for personal services and in failing to report gifts from Capasso, and of "serious misconduct" in hiring as an assistant the daughter of a judge who a month later reduced Capasso's maintenance payments to his wife by two-thirds. On the question of whether she had helped Capasso win city contracts, the report (according to the summary) essentially passed. On March 30th, Capasso had been sentenced to four years in prison and fined half a million dollars, having pleaded guilty to all nine counts of a federal indictment charging him with evasion of corporate taxes. Miss Myerson told reporters that he was "a man of tremendous personal integrity," and his lawyer told the prosecutors, "Mr. Capasso states that he is not a rat." There was speculation that Capasso had hoped his guilty plea would end other federal inquiries into his affairs, but Giuliani said they would continue to be pursued by the federal grand jury.

At the April 9th press conference at which the Mayor announced Miss Myerson's resignation, she was not present. His face was grim. Speaking in the hurried monotone he normally uses for material prepared for him to read, he referred to the day as being painful for them both. Appropriately, in view of all she had done for him over the years his letter responding to her letter of resignation hit a more sympathetic note than has been customary in mayoral responses to resignations under fire. His letter, which was handed out to the press, mentioned that this was a time "for your friends, and I am one of them, to give you the emotional support that you undoubtedly need and have every reason to expect." However, when the arrangements for her resignation had been made by her lawyer and the city's corporation counsel, the night before, the Mayor did not call her, although it was surely a time when emotional support from a friend would have been welcome. Late in the evening, she called him, and they spoke for what he told reporters was "a few moments."

The week after the announcement of Bess Myerson's resignation, a *Post* cartoon showed two adjacent sketches of Koch. The caption under one was a remark the Mayor made on an April 13th radio appearance: "My administration is probably the most honest in the history of government." Below the other was his purported proof for this claim: "They've all admitted they're crooks." Although those who have departed precipitately from City Hall in recent months aren't likely to be asked back there soon, they may be welcome at important parties on the New York social scene. Such parties are often now said to include guests who have been in trouble with the law and are now out on bail, have served their time, or have been acquitted after a lurid trial—an approach to fashionable at-homes that might be called rascal chic. Writing about this phenomenon in the *Times* recently, Georgia Dullea reported that the Wall Street insider Ivan Boesky, Sydney Biddle Barrows, otherwise known as the Mayflower Madam, and Claus von Bülow are particularly in demand among some hostesses in the high-level social ramble, she said. That handsome pair Bess and Andy would surely qualify, and if some of the other City Hall regulars who have embarrassed the Mayor are not already on the list of this new Four Hundred perhaps the lawyers who now play such central roles in their lives could introduce them around. (Sinning, when uncovered, is very job intensive for the legal profession.) Thomas Puccio, who defended von Bülow in his second trial for the attempted murder of his wife, is the lawyer for both Stanley Friedman and John McLaughlin. Another of von Bülow's former attorneys, Alan Dershowitz, has now joined Puccio in handling Friedman's appeal of his twelve-year sentence. Harold Tyler is von Bülow's present lawyer. The rascal-chic guest list would not, of course, ordinarily include any of the discharged population of the city's floating jails.

THE Mayor's response to the bad turn in his fortunes has been one that is often resorted to in such circumstances: he has put on a great deal of weight. Like many men in their sixties, he has developed jowls, and his hair is gone except for a wispy fringe. During the 1984 Presidential campaign, when Gary Hart's supporters made a big point of the age difference between him and Walter Mondale, no one here seemed to notice that there is the same spread of years between Mario Cuomo and Koch: Cuomo was born in 1932 and the Mayor in 1924. When they are in the same room, the age difference is now quite evident. Koch rarely wears a suit jacket over his ample girth, even for such ceremonial occasions as the swearing in of judges, and there is often an air of dishevelment about him, as about the City Hall agenda generally. With the Mayor, anger is very close to the surface. Last month, the *Times*, which often seems bent on helping him put the best possible face on things, ran a front-page story about him that used the word "mellows" in the headline, causing reporters at whom he had snapped and snarled that week to wonder what he might have called them if he had not mellowed. There are daily press conferences that feature one or another of his administration's achievements, but despite all this good news the Mayor's eyes move joylessly about the room. If he knows what he is looking for, he does not seem to find it. When some publication asks his office for a picture to illustrate an article about him or his administration, one that is often sent was clearly taken early in his City Hall years. In it he is a relatively slender figure in a well-tailored suit, narrow of face, his hair neatly combed, his eyes bright and confident, as indeed they were in the days before so many of the members of his City Hall team began to be thrown out of the game.

—ANDY LOGAN

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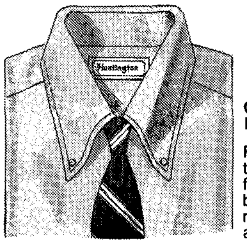

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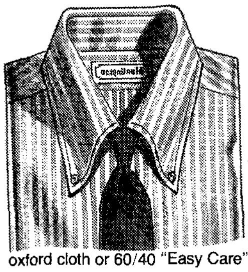

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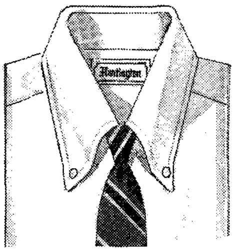

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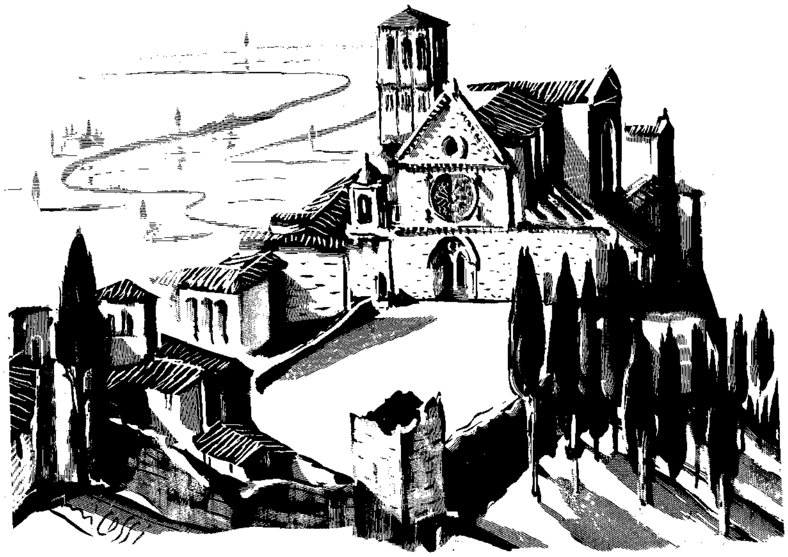


THE town of Assisi rises out of the Umbrian plain like a pink stone mirage, or an illustration from an old-fashioned fairy-tale book. Miraculously—despite the millions of tourists who annually flock to the birthplace of St. Francis, and the proliferation of toy crossbows and religious kitsch—it has retained its character as a pure medieval town. The biographers of St. Francis describe him as a merry and headstrong young troubadour who dressed elegantly and dreamed of becoming a knight before he embraced an ascetic life. It requires no effort at all to imagine him wandering the steep, cobbled streets with companions as indolent and handsome as the young *signori* who lounge nowadays near the fountain of the Piazza del Comune or stroll beneath the colonnade of the great Basilica of St. Francis, which was begun in 1228, two years after the saint's death.

Last fall, the basilica was the site of an elaborate ecumenical service conducted by representatives of the world's five major religions. The ceremony, along with an international environmental conference, a religious retreat, a four-day theatrical spectacle, and a pilgrimage, marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Wildlife Fund International (now the World Wide Fund for Nature), the world's largest private conservation organization. The religious leaders who participated in the event were the Venerable Lungrig Namgyal, the abbot of Gyuto Tantric College, in Arunachal Pradesh, India, and the personal representative of the Dalai Lama; Father Lanfranco Serrini, the minister-general of the Franciscan order Frati Minori Conventuali; His Excellency Dr. Karan Singh, the president of the Virat Hindu Samaj, an Indian social-welfare and reform organization; His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Omar Nasseef, of Saudi Arabia, the secretary-general of the Muslim World League; and Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, of the United States, the vice-president of the World Jewish Congress.

IN 1961, when a handful of European conservationists conceived the idea of establishing the wildlife-rescue charity that was eventually to become W.W.F. International, few people shared their concern about vanishing species, or, for that matter, about any other environmental problem. Popular awareness of the hazards posed by disappearing tropical rain forests and acid rain was practically nil, and Ministries of the Environment were as yet unheard of; it was assumed that governments could and would solve on an ad-hoc basis any such problems that arose.

The Fund had been suggested by a series of articles by Sir Julian Huxley about the destruction of East African wildlife which appeared in the *Observer* early in 1961. A British businessman, Victor Stolan, wrote to Huxley and said that he thought some kind of international appeal should be set up on behalf of all wild species threatened by extinction, and Huxley forwarded their correspondence to Max Nicholson, who was then a trustee of the *Observer* and the director-general of the Nature Conservancy, a council that advises the government on conservation matters. A few weeks later, Nicholson discussed the matter with the ornithologist Peter Scott at a scientific conference they were both attending in Switzerland. They agreed that the time had come to establish some sort of wildlife charity that would offer international support to the rather small clique of scientists and philanthropists who were then the sole protectors of vanishing species, and the first public meeting of the new group was held on September 26, 1961, at the Royal Society of Arts, in London. Shortly thereafter, the organization set up its headquarters in Switzerland—for tax purposes and easier clearance of international funds—and it has remained there ever since.

At least part of the growing interest in conservation matters in the nineteen-sixties can, I think, be directly attributed to the impassioned bulletins penned by W.W.F.'s first international-campaign director, an ebullient Scotsman named Ian MacPhail. This extract, from his first and prototypical appeal, gives a good idea of the full-chested MacPhail style: "Around the world, in jungle and in hedgerow, on pampa, plain and prairie, veld, moorland and marsh, an awesome silence is growing like the gathering darkness. Listen . . . to the elephant's trumpeting getting fainter . . . to the rhino's thunder becoming a distant murmur . . . the curlew's call getting lonelier . . . the blackbird's song of joy turning into a lament." MacPhail usually appended a clutch of heartrending photographs to his appeals. In this case, there was, among others, a photograph of a baby elephant scratching in a dried-up water hole for something to drink, and another of a fallen rhinoceros whose horns had been cut off by poachers.

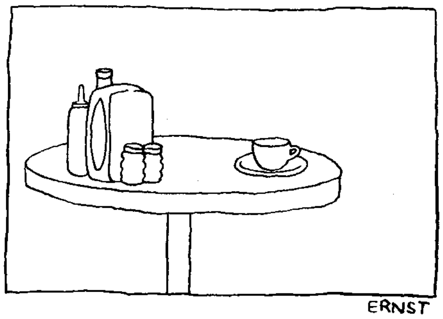
In those early and what many regard as simpler days, much of W.W.F.'s money in Britain came from schoolchildren, old-age pensioners, and softhearted animal lovers responding to a growing number of stories in the press about endangered species. The Fund concentrated on raising the public's consciousness about environmental issues, and among its first projects were strengthening anti-poaching patrols in Uganda in order to save the rhinoceros from extinction; purchasing a vast waterbird wetland near Seville which was about to be sold to a hunting syndicate;

working closely with the Indian government on Operation Tiger, an effort that saved the Bengal tiger—whose numbers had dwindled from forty thousand at the end of the nineteenth century to less than two thousand by the early seventies—from going the way of the dodo; and making large grants to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (I.U.C.N.), which plans and carries out environmental projects all over the world. Eventually, W.W.F. affiliates were set up in twenty-three countries.

The World Wildlifers have always been known as a rather nobby lot. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands was their first president, and Prince Philip of Britain is their present one. To be sure, the organization's ranks have always been filled with eminent biologists and dedicated conservationists, but an unusually large number of names on its membership list also appear on the membership lists of some of the world's exclusive men's clubs and on the boards of large national and international corporations. At first, this was looked upon as an entirely happy circumstance: in the words of a recent W.W.F. booklet, "these leading figures from many walks of society took the conservation message to politicians, leaders, or businessmen, as well as the media, in countries all over the world." In Europe, the ecological concern of members of various royal houses was considered particularly helpful, since, as one longtime observer of environmental politics has observed, "rectifying environmental disasters can cost a lot of money—and nobody, but nobody, can get people to whip out their checkbooks faster than a Royal." But over the years, as awareness of the severity of the world's ecological problems grew, what was viewed as W.W.F.'s save-the-species-no-matter-what approach seemed less and less effective. It became evident, for example, that the arrival of foreign notables in, say, an African village with high hopes for development that included clearing forestland for short-term cash crops or cattle-grazing, and their insistence that the plan be dropped because it threatened the local bird population, was economically, and even morally, untenable.

On the other hand, it was becoming equally evident that most governments were not acting decisively to avert environmental catastrophe, and that privately funded groups like W.W.F. had by default come to be nature's chief and sometimes only advocates. As a consequence, the Fund began to shift its focus. It moved away from supporting mainly single-species projects—activities that some of its less charitable critics referred to as "protecting cuddly animals"—and toward supporting what it called "habitat and ecosystem conservation strategies." It began to work more closely with government planners; it helped develop school programs that described the dangers of various pollutants; it emphasized the relevance of conservation to human welfare; and, in 1980, together with I.U.C.N. and the United Nations Environmental Programme, it published a by now famous paper called "World Conservation Strategy," which argued that conservation was necessary for sound economic development and stated as its objective the "maintenance of essential ecological processes and life-support systems, preservation of genetic diversity, and sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems."

Despite this shift, and despite the fact that since its founding it has spent more than a hundred and thirty million dollars on some five thousand projects in a hundred and thirty countries, the Fund still has its critics—particularly in the Third World. They claim that the group's élitist structure prevents it from seeing many issues from the point of view of most of the world's hungry and impoverished people, and they have expressed serious doubts about the appropriateness of some of the organization's leaders, among whom have been executives of large multinational corporations that have caused major pollution problems for the world. Critics have also pointed out that a number of royal members of Woof-Woof (as W.W.F. is often and not always affectionately referred to), including two of its presidents, Bernhard and Philip, have been enthusiastic hunters. Conservationists still shake their heads over an event that some say caused Philip considerable embarrassment and regret: the notorious tiger incident. On a royal visit to India in early 1961—about the time W.W.F. was being set up—during a stay at the Maharaja of Jaipur's hunting lodge, Philip shot what was described in the *Times* of London as a "good-sized" tiger. A small royal party had been out game-shooting—an excursion that had resulted in (the *Times* again) "a good bag of sand grouse and partridge"—when someone brought the news that two tigers had been sighted in the vicinity. The group immediately headed for the area of the sighting and, as two hundred beaters drove the tigers into a clearing, took up positions on a machan (a kind of raised platform), with the Queen looking on from a place of safety nearby. When the tigers drew close, Philip felled one, and Rear Admiral C. Bonham Carter, the treasurer of Philip's household, brought down the other. Back in England, nasty remarks were made in the press about the Duke of Edinburgh's revival of an imperialist sport that ought to have disappeared along with the raj. British public opinion being what it is, Philip showed up at the next tiger hunt arranged for him—a month later, in a jungle near Kathmandu—with a tactfully bandaged trigger finger.



In the last few years, the fact that environmental crises were fast outpacing its best efforts—the world's rain forests sustain fifty per cent of the world's species, but half the forests are already gone, and at the present rate of destruction (about a hundred acres a minute) they will have vanished entirely in forty years—has prompted much soul-searching within the Fund. In 1985, when its officers were thinking about a suitable way to celebrate the organization's approaching twenty-fifth anniversary, the idea began circulating that perhaps the celebration might also serve as an occasion for the Fund to broaden its appeal. Many of its members believed that the time had arrived for the Fund to become a more populist group—one that would be sensitive to grass-roots environmental issues. As it happened, it was Prince Philip who found a way to launch this new approach. He had been impressed by a beautifully designed children's book called "Worlds of Difference," written by Martin Palmer and Esther Bisset and commissioned by the Fund, with a foreword by the Dalai Lama. The book describes the creation myths of the world's major religions and of other "belief systems," such as those of the Australian aborigines and the Yanomamö Sanema Indians of the Amazon Basin, and explores the ways in which people's spiritual beliefs influence the way they treat nature. Its marriage of ecumenical and environmental themes struck Philip as the very mechanism W.W.F. might use to spread its conservation message more effectively, and, because of St. Francis's beneficent association with nature and wildlife, his native town of Assisi was chosen as the site for the anniversary celebration.

Thus was born the idea of the ecumenical service in the basilica. The ceremony would be preceded by a retreat at the Sacro Convento the basilica's Franciscan friary, where the religious leaders would gather to discuss their faiths' attitudes toward the environment. Afterward, it was reasoned, ways would be found to communicate the conservation message of the events in Assisi to the entire global network of local priests, mullahs, rabbis, lamas, and swamis who had intimate contact with that vast segment of the population which neither read papers nor watched television nor subscribed to magazines like *Natural History*, *Sierra*, and *National Geographic*.

When word of Prince Philip's unusual plan for the Assisi conference got around to the organization's national affiliates, there was at first quite a lot of resistance to it. Putting religion on the menu at Assisi would not only offend the many staunch secularists among the Fund's supporters, they thought, but also confuse everybody connected with W.W.F. projects about the meaning of this radical departure from strict scientific-humanist protocol. In the end, though, the dominant view seemed to be that enlightened, ecumenically tailored spiritual discourse about nature could hardly be detrimental to the conservation cause, and might actually help it. Even those who remained unconvinced had to concede that getting leaders of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu worlds together to talk about *anything* would be a remarkable feat.

The anniversary celebration, scheduled to run from September 26th through September 29th, was planned so that there would be something for everybody: a two-day ecological conference chaired by Prince Philip and featuring speakers from the scientific, political, and educational communities; the pilgrimage, from four different points in Italy, of people from various religious and environmental groups (a few of them—for example, Greenpeace, which would be there unofficially—were radical activist organizations that considered environmental issues inseparable from nuclear ones); the ongoing theatrical spectacle, which was to include performances by Indian dancers, Tibetan singers and acrobats, Swiss hornblowers, and a Hungarian rabbinical choir; the retreat for the religious leaders, from which the press and all other secular onlookers were to be excluded; and the ceremony in the basilica, in which difficulties of precedence and protocol would be resolved, it was hoped, by having five separate liturgies run alternately.

ON Wednesday, September 24th, the five religious leaders were to assemble in Rome, where they would meet one another and representatives of W.W.F. on an informal basis before proceeding to Assisi. The Italians and the W.W.F. staff, obviously nervous about the safety of their distinguished guests, had booked them all into the same hotel, the Rivoli—a small, comfortable, flower-bedecked hotel in the northern part of the city, chosen chiefly because the only way of approaching it was through a narrow cul-de-sac that was relatively easy to secure. The people in charge of security arrangements were especially concerned about Rabbi Hertzberg, a well-known liberal Judaic scholar and a former executive of the World Zionist Organization, whose frequently expressed views on Israeli issues made him, from his hosts' point of view, a possible target for terrorist bullets. From the moment the rabbi's plane touched down at Fiumicino Airport to the moment he boarded another plane to fly home, he was never more than a few feet away from two or three stalwart Italian security men and, in some places, from a uniformed guard carrying a large automatic weapon.

A few hours after Rabbi Hertzberg and his wife, Phyllis, arrived at the hotel, they settled themselves at a table on the Rivoli's geranium- and azalea-filled tiled terrace, where I had arranged to meet them for tea. The rabbi, a small, dapper man in his mid-sixties with extremely watchful eyes, looked a bit jet-lagged but eager to proceed. The presence of a young guard with an automatic rifle hovering protectively behind some potted bougainvil-

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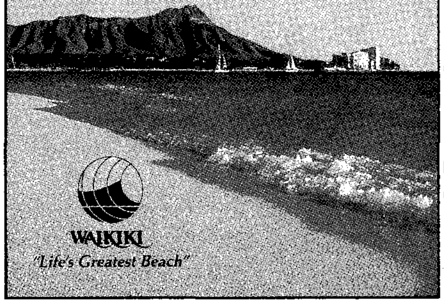

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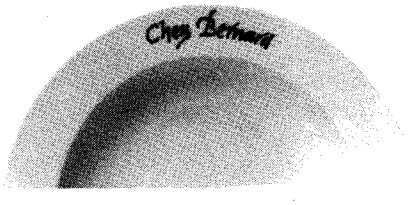

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lea nearby obviously left him unfazed. I asked him if the religious leaders planned to visit the Pope, or if the Pope was playing any role in the religious events.

"No," he said, choosing his words carefully. "We're not meeting the Pope, and he's not, so to speak, meeting us."

Months earlier, there had been talk of some kind of meeting with Pope John Paul II on the way to Assisi, or even of the possibility that the Pope would play a role in the ceremony at the basilica. Nothing came of this, Hertzberg said, because the group felt that, in keeping with the ecumenical spirit of the event, there should not be an "audience"—the conventional way that dignitaries meet with the Pope—but, rather, a meeting of equals. The notion of this kind of meeting must have been unacceptable to the Vatican, because after it was proposed months went by without any response from Rome. Rabbi Hertzberg confessed that the issue of meeting as equals probably had more symbolic significance for him than it did for his four colleagues. "The Catholic Church has never recognized Israel," he said, and he went on to explain that though the current Pope had denounced anti-Semitism before a delegation of American Jewish leaders in Rome in 1985, the traditional Vatican position on Israel has generally been in line with that taken by Pope Pius X in 1904. At a papal audience, Pius was asked by Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, to explain the reason for his opposition to the return of Jews to the Holy Land. Pius answered, "The Jews have not recognized Our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people," and added that if the Jews returned, the Church would "be ready with churches and priests to baptize all of you."

Not long before the Assisi meeting, Hertzberg had written an Op-Ed piece for the New York *Times* which bore the heading "ROME MUST RECOGNIZE ISRAEL." In it he declared that "Jewish discomfort" with the Church's position had grown in recent years. The Church's leaders "refuse . . . to accept the notion that world Jewry—like the Church itself—has temporal as well as spiritual concerns," he wrote. "They want to treat us as a purely spiritual entity so they can avoid dealing with the issue that matters most to us—explicit recognition of Israel." Since the Vatican had had this gauntlet thrown at it around the time the Assisi

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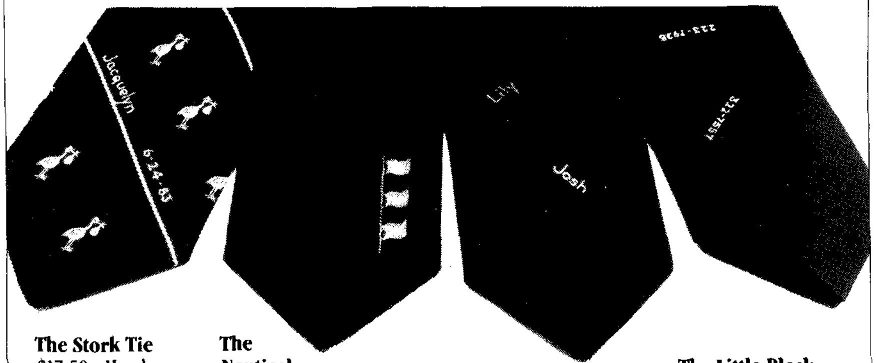

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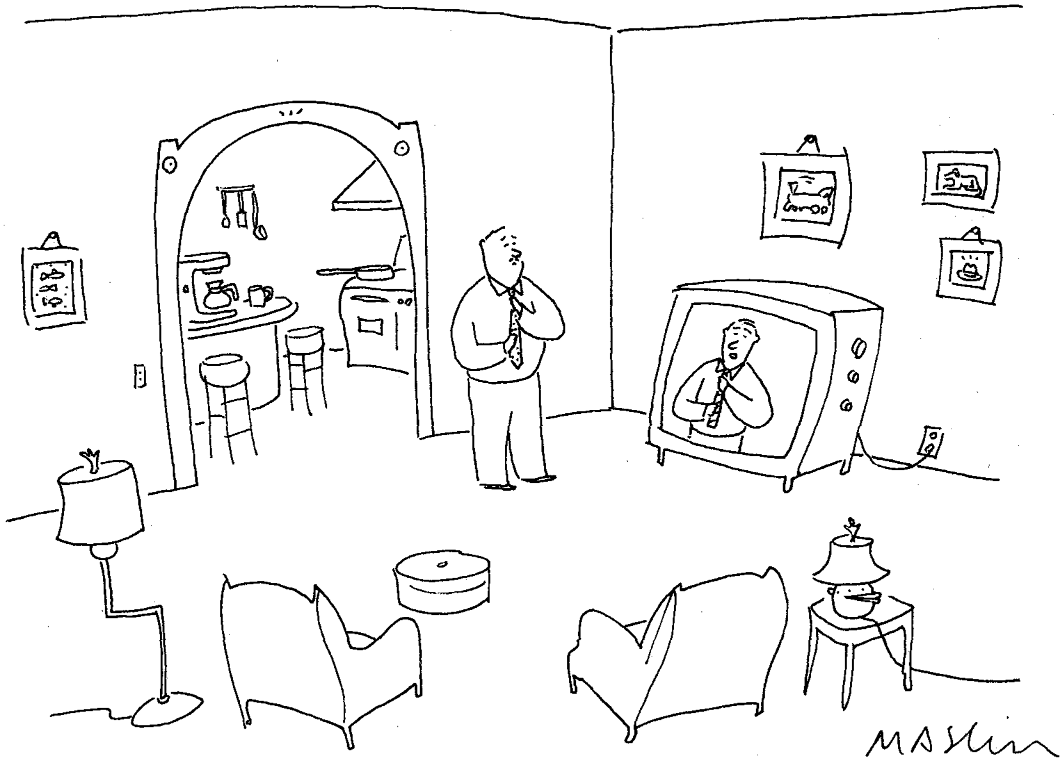


"You've been getting dressed with me—Herb Henry. Coming up next: juice with Louise Hay, two eggs, toast, and coffee with Stu Farnell, and then it's out the door with Kenny Mott."

• •

events were being planned, its reluctance to meet Rabbi Hertzberg and the other leaders on anything but its own terms was perhaps not surprising; Hertzberg, for his part, told the people arranging the trip that at such a gathering each leader would be representing a particular faith, and that insofar as the meeting was concerned the Pope was the Bishop of Rome and he was the Rabbi of Englewood, New Jersey—the seat of the synagogue he had served for thirty years.

Prince Philip's well-known views on population growth might have prompted the Vatican to stay clear of the Assisi gathering in any case. Even in non-religious circles, the Prince's outspokenness on this subject had made waves. On a visit some years ago to the maternity ward of a hospital in the Solomon Islands, Philip was told that the population of the islands was growing at an annual rate of five per cent. "You'll have a massive economic crisis in twenty years' time, and blame everybody else," he snapped at the local dignitaries, and marched out of the ward. According to a local reporter, he was still muttering "Ridiculous!" when he "swept into a neighboring wing where the Queen was visiting nursing mothers." And on a 1982 visit to Egypt (a country not known for its abundance of wildlife) on behalf of W.W.F.—a visit during which his entourage had spent a good deal of time stuck in Cairo traffic jams—he was quoted by the London *Daily Express* as telling a group of Egyptian reporters that the trouble with their fellow-countrymen was that they bred too much.

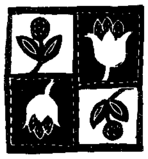
In the end, no meeting of any kind was arranged with the Pope. Instead, several cardinals were invited to lunch. This solution obviated problems of state protocol and might be justified on pragmatic grounds, since at least two of the prelates attending—Cardinal Etchegaray, a Basque, who heads the Vatican Commission on Justice and Peace, and Cardinal Arinze, a Nigerian, who heads the Secretariat for Non-Christians—concerned themselves with ecumenical matters and could conceivably help W.W.F. by lending their authority to its projects.

By late afternoon, the Venerable Lungrig Namgyal and his translator, both in saffron-and-burgundy robes, had arrived at the hotel. After checking into their rooms, they went directly to the hotel bar, where they ordered San Pellegrino water and apples. The translator, whose name was Cheme Tsering, was an intense, intelligent-looking young man with short-cropped hair and sharply chiselled features. He had been brought along because the Rinpoche—one of Namgyal's other titles, meaning "Precious One"—spoke neither English nor Italian. The Rinpoche himself had remarkably unchiselled features; in fact, he appeared to be almost seamless, like a cloud. He was slightly plump, had a shaved pate, and wore light-brown tinted glasses, through which he gazed with an alert, inquisitive expression. By way of Cheme, he asked me if I'd found it strange, as he had, to plummet into the middle of another culture. Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Dr. Singh, a suave-looking man in his middle fifties dressed in a dark-brown short-sleeved suit, who introduced himself with the air of someone who has had a great deal of practice plummeting into diverse cultures. He handed around a pamphlet that had his photograph on the cover. The pamphlet explained that he was the son of Maharaja Hari Singh, and that he had been active in Indian politics since 1949, when, at the age of eighteen, he had been appointed regent of Jammu and Kashmir by his father. Like the Vicar of Bray in the English ballad, Dr. Singh had, it seemed, managed to remain in power throughout what the pamphlet referred to as "drastically shifting political results on the national scene," remaining the head of his state for eighteen years. During these years, it said, he was "strikingly successful in fulfilling the delicate and onerous duties that devolved upon him as Head of one of the crucial States of the Union." Later, as a politician in the "new" India, he served in such varied posts as Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation and Minister for Health and Family Planning. Rumor had it that Dr. Singh was on excellent terms with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and that the British government had been particularly keen on his attending the conference.

As everybody was puzzling over the pamphlet, Rabbi Hertzberg came in, accompanied by a bespectacled man with receding curly blond hair and high coloring, whom he introduced as Michael May, the assistant director of the London-based Institute of Jewish Affairs, which is the research arm of the World Jewish Congress. Dr. John Hanks, a zoologist and W.W.F.'s projects manager, told the assembled group that he would be representing W.W.F. at the retreat. Dr. Hanks, a tall, hearty man who was wearing a suit and tie but managed to look as if he'd just stepped out of a Land-Rover, said that he had begun his career "mainly as an elephant man" and had worked in Africa on various projects for twenty years. Recently, he had seen the need to look at nature from "a more global point of view," and thus had high hopes for the meeting at Assisi. After a short interval during which the conferees engaged in various overt and covert forms of sizing each other up, Dr. Hanks suggested that the leaders and their aides might like to rest for a while, and all seemed eager to do so.

When the others had repaired to their rooms, I took a little turn around the nearby Borghese Gardens. I had been hoping to be able to get inside the Villa Borghese, but, like so many famous Roman sites that have been damaged by pollution, the museum was under repair, surrounded by scaffolding, and closed to the public that afternoon. When I got back to the Rivoli, there was a tremendous uproar, caused by a last-minute call from the Vatican. In an abrupt about-face, the Pope had invited—in effect, summoned—the religious leaders to visit him the next day before they left for Assisi. The invitation was issued for noon, at precisely the time the luncheon with the cardinals was supposed to take place. Martin Palmer, a lanky young man with a thin beard and a previously calm demeanor, and two assistants—all of them from the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture (ICOREC), a multifaith educational group based in Manchester, England—who were overseeing arrangements for the religious aspects of the conference, were dashing back and forth across the hotel lobby with panicky expressions. To complicate matters, the luncheon itself also included Cardinal Casaroli, the Vatican Secretary of State, and a man not to be trifled with. Palmer, the co-author of the much admired "Worlds of Difference," was known for his diplomatic skills, but these were being sorely tried. Someone wondered aloud if the change in plans had anything to do with the fact that the popular Italian weekly news magazine *Panorama*, which is similar to *Newsweek*, had just come out with a big piece on the Assisi event. Perhaps the Vatican felt that it hadn't been taking the conference seriously enough? After a quick polling, the religious leaders agreed that since they were in Pope John Paul's town, as it were, it would be impossible to turn his invitation down. "You really can't just say that you're busy, can you?" the Rinpoche's young translator remarked.

Palmer's two assistants—a turbaned Sikh named Daljit Singh and a slim, permanently bemused-looking young anthropologist named Michael Shackleton—were dispatched to fetch Father Serrini and two other Franciscans from their friary, on the other side of the city, while the W.W.F. staff people and Palmer huddled near the bar. During their lengthy discussion, the hotel's playful pet kitten leaped time and again onto the backs of the Wildlifers' chairs, dived into their laps, and scrambled atop their knees. To no avail; they ignored him, as did every other member of the group who happened to be in the lobby. After a while, the kitten gave up on them, turned toward the hotel's restaurant, in a corner of the lobby, and made his way toward the only sign of life there—a small fold of saffron robe. He did not return, and was later seen draped over the Rinpoche's shoulder. The Buddhist was sipping tea and feeding the animal morsels of his roll.



Most of the members of the religious party had arrived and settled down with various alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks in a little anteroom near the bar by the time Daljit and Michael returned to the hotel—amid much groaning about the horrors of Rome traffic—with the three Franciscans, who were wearing the traditional black hooded robes and rope belts of their order: Father Serrini, who has been minister-general of his order since 1983 and radiates a kind of straightforward, guileless benevolence; Father Joachim, a tall American who was to serve as Father Serrini's translator; and Father Bernard, an urbane Canadian, who is a professor of theology at the Seraphicum Theological Seminary, in Rome, and works with

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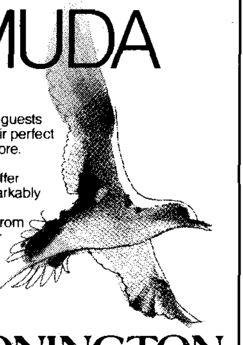

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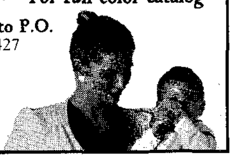

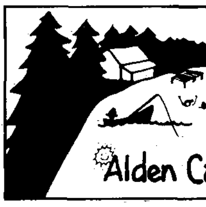

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the Holy Office on doctrinal matters. If this were the time of the Medici, one would carefully consider everything one said in Father Bernard's presence. The Franciscans had been a logical choice to represent Christianity at Assisi because of the identification of their founder with the natural world. In 1979, Francis was actually declared the patron saint of ecology by papal bull; and his famous "Canticle of Brother Sun," a mystical paean to the natural world, was destined to be cited again and again by delegates at the Assisi conference as if it were a kind of ecological catechism.

When everybody was settled at a long, cloth-covered table in the hotel's restaurant, one of the Franciscans remarked on the absence of Dr. Nasseef from the party. Palmer said that Nasseef's people had called to say that he'd been unavoidably detained but that a colleague, Dr. Abubaker Bagader, the chairman of the Department of Islamic Studies at King Abdul Aziz University, in Jidda, was supposed to be arriving the next day—in time, it was hoped, for the luncheon. As Palmer told the group about this unforeseen hitch in the plans, Rabbi Hertzberg gazed at him thoughtfully. I asked the rabbi what he thought it meant.

"I really don't know, but I'm extremely curious about it," he replied. "Nasseef and I shared a platform at a National Council of Churches meeting in Fort Worth last November, and afterward, at a meeting in my hotel room, we agreed in principle to jointly finance and staff a hunger project in Africa. I said that the W.J.C. would put up a million dollars toward it, and the Christians said that they could do the same. Nasseef said that he didn't foresee any problem with his group's putting up an equal amount, and that he'd get back to me soon about it. Alas, he never did, and I've always wondered why. He's a Sunni Muslim, you know, and very close to the Saudi royal family. Perhaps he had extended his brief. Perhaps they didn't approve of his ecumenism. I can't help wondering if that's why he isn't showing up here."

After a robust pasta dinner, Palmer, his assistants, and the religious leaders spent the evening probing the pros and cons of various arrangements for the luncheon and the papal encounter. Palmer was worried about offending the cardinals. If only a few people in their group showed up for the luncheon, he thought it would look bad. Their guests were, after all, three of the most distinguished cardinals in Rome. Dr. Singh said that, of course, somebody had to stay and welcome them, but that the Pope surely had to be given priority over the cardinals. By the end of the evening, the Rinpoche, Dr. Singh, and Father Serrini had agreed to accept the Pope's invitation; Rabbi Hertzberg would send Michael May along in his stead. The group was assured that, whatever happened, the *Osservatore Romano*—the Vatican daily—would describe the event as a "meeting" rather than an "audience," and that the visitors would not be mentioned by name. To make doubly sure that no cardinal would feel slighted, the luncheon was to be moved to one o'clock, in the hope that the others could return in time to catch the end of the meal.

The next morning, before the Vatican party was about to head off, John Hanks encountered Dr. Singh in the lobby. Hanks looked exhausted, and was heard to observe that power politics seemed to be playing the dominant role in everything that was happening in Rome.

"But, my dear fellow," said Dr. Singh, "you can't really complain. It's the nature of the thing. Power is political. You might as well ask water not to be wet."

THE lunch went exceptionally well. The three cardinals arrived, in their black cassocks and rose-red skullcaps and sashes, at the appointed hour, and they created a great stir as they cut their way through the crowd toward a conference room just beyond the hotel lobby, where everyone was assembling for apéritifs. After sniffing the air a bit, the three circulated separately, moving around the room with the adroitness that one associates with Renaissance diplomacy. Dr. Bagader, a gregarious American-educated sociologist, had arrived, albeit at the last moment—to the great relief of the luncheon planners, who were afraid that the ecumenical ranks were a little thin. Standing at opposite sides of the room, Rabbi Hertzberg and Cardinal Casaroli, a man with a prominent nose and the fixed pleasant expression of one who is rarely contradicted, glanced at each other with considerable interest, and, chatting with other people as they moved along, gradually made their way toward each other. By the end of this diplomatic pas de deux, they had maneuvered themselves to within a few feet of each other, whereupon they retreated together to a distant corner of the room and remained there, in what appeared to be an engrossing conversation, until lunchtime.

Toward the end of lunch, the Vatican party returned, with the eager air of athletes who have been sitting on the sidelines too long; apparently, the papal meeting had consisted mainly of exchanges of innocuous good wishes. It had taken place not in one of the large public reception rooms, as had been expected, but in a small, elegant room that looked like a working office. The group had been ushered through no fewer than seven rooms, and had been greeted in each by a number of cardinals and papal functionaries, before they finally reached the Pope. The meeting lasted for twenty minutes, of which the first and last five minutes were given over to handshakes; in between, the Pope spoke about the importance of the Assisi conference and the necessity of thinking about the environment in moral terms. He also referred to a visit he was soon to make to Assisi for a peace conference, and said that, in a sense, the religious leaders were paving the way for him. As the group lined up for their parting handshakes, two doors, one on each side of the office, opened as if by magic, and several photographers sprang out and snapped everyone's picture together with John Paul. "I had the impression that he'd been doing this sort of thing all morning," Michael May said.

The lunch ended fairly quickly, because the security men were eager to get everybody to Assisi, which was several hours away, by nightfall. Just before everyone quit the table, John Hanks invited the Rinpoche to say a closing prayer. Looking rather startled, the Venerable slowly put down some grapes he was eating for dessert. Then he stood up, closed his eyes, and, shaping his lips in the kiss position, produced a series of resonant basso-profundo "oh"s and (lips parted) "ah"s that sounded as if they were coming from a cave in the deepest recesses of the earth. Cheme explained afterward that the prayer was a kind of good-luck blessing. He had to be right, of course, though to my untutored ear it had sounded more like an invitation to become a stone.

IT was drizzling slightly when we left Rome in several packed cars and a van a few hours later. The rain intensified the gridlock on the main

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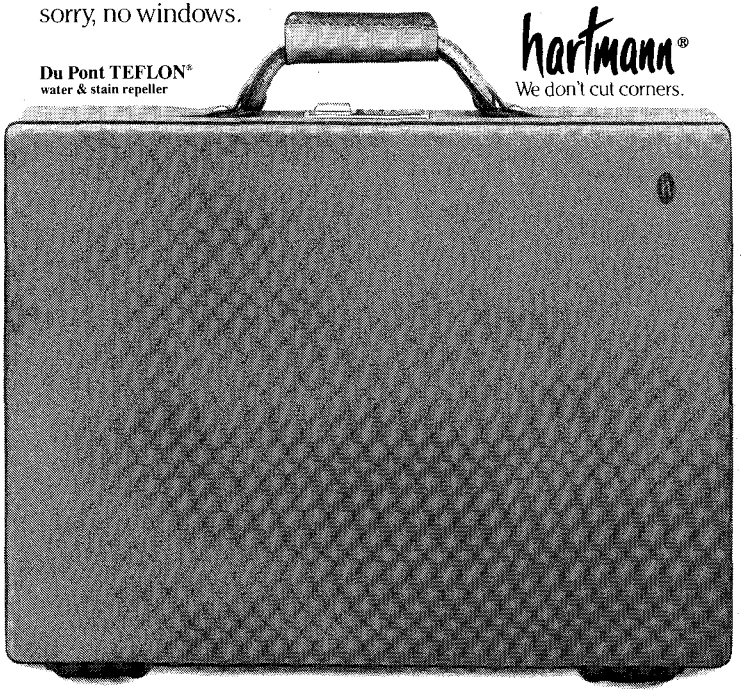

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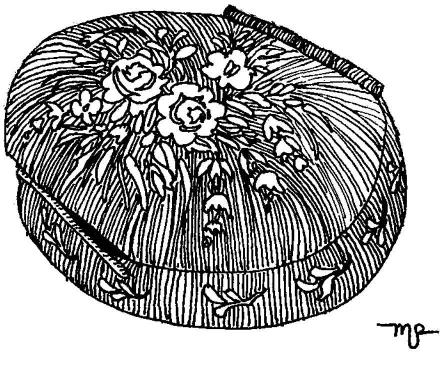
Roman thoroughfares and in no way inhibited the drivers along the highway. For years, I'd assumed that the monumental, almost surreal traffic jam in "Fellini's Roma" was a form of playful social criticism. It was plain to me now that, on the contrary, the sequence was straight *cinéma vérité*.

At dusk, the cars carrying the religious leaders and their police escorts ascended Mt. Subasio to the ancient gates of the Sacro Convento, next door to the basilica, where the leaders would remain cloistered until the ecumenical service on Monday. The street life of Assisi was bustling as the cars drew up before the gates, and Rabbi Hertzberg gazed at the crowd through the window of his car with the expression of a boy whose mother has called him away from his friends to do his homework. Virtually every spare room in town had been booked by Wildlifers or reporters, and in my hotel—the San Pietro, a small, bustling establishment near the center of town—the desk clerk was spending much of his time conveying his regrets that he had no rooms available for latecomers without reservations.

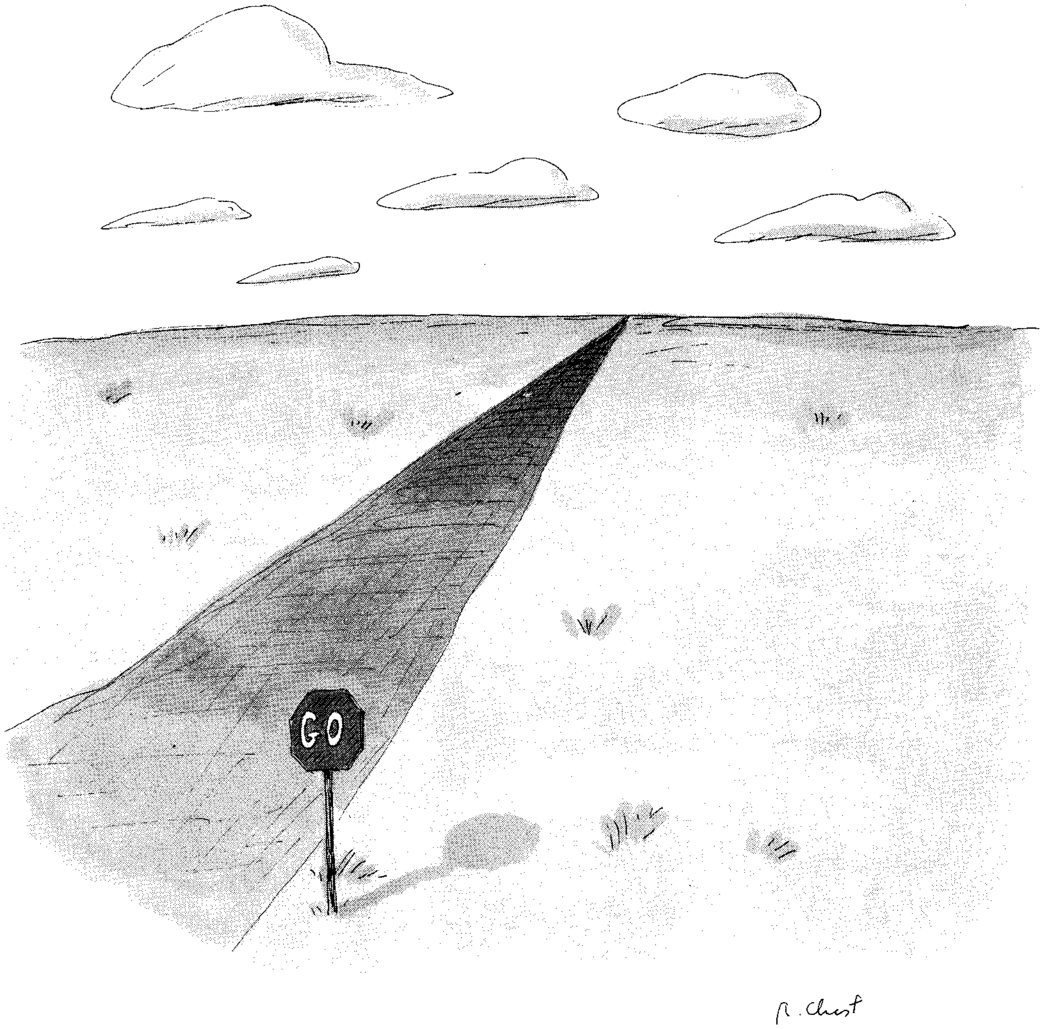
The next morning, a Friday, I rose early and strolled along the cobbled streets, which were still damp from rain and all but deserted. Throwing open the shutters of my hotel room when I'd got up, I'd been struck by the absence (*pace* St. Francis) of bird-calls. In fact, there were no birds anywhere. Prince Philip, too, had noticed the absence of birds in Assisi. Shortly after his arrival, he remarked to several of the town officials that "no vestige of the natural environment" was left in Assisi, and that "there are not even any birds up here." The shooting of birds has long been a favorite sport in Italy, and over the years the country's feathered population has become decimated, so that one can sometimes travel for miles without seeing a bird. As it happened, the W.W.F. anniversary event was scheduled to take place right in the middle of bird-hunting season, and the thought of the conservationists' waking up each morning to the *pop-pop* of hunting rifles—or, worse, confronting some local squire as he trudged across their path with his brace of partridge—had the town's officials terrified. The potential crisis was averted by placing a ban on bird-shooting in the area for the duration of the conference. As soon as the last bird-watchers had left, sportsmen would be free to return to their favorite bogs and dells. This profoundly Italian solution to a potentially sticky problem was universally acclaimed in Assisi. The officials accepted the congratulations of local restaurateurs and hoteliers and owners of tourist shops for their magnificent tact, and that, everyone believed, was the end of the matter, until Prince Philip stirred up the whole business again with his public rebuke. When questioned by a reporter about the remark, Pietro Profumi, Assisi's small, plump mayor, could hardly contain his annoyance. He said that the charge simply wasn't true—there were plenty of birds in Assisi. "We have pigeons," he explained.

Coming out of the post office later that morning, I saw four tall, un-Mediterranean-looking men emerging from the Hotel Subasio, which was across the narrow street. They were discussing the weather. The most elegant of them, whose nose was noticeably red, looked vaguely familiar, but it was not until he turned his head in profile that I realized that it was Prince Philip. As he and his equerries made their way toward the Cittadella, a sprawling modern conference center at the top of one of Assisi's steepest streets, where the conference was shortly to open, two security men in houndstooth-check jackets padded along several yards behind—a far scantier guard than the one that had been assigned to the religious leaders. Except for a few elderly workmen who doffed their caps and exclaimed "*Principe!*" as he passed, hardly anyone recognized him.

At ten o'clock, the first session of the two-day conference was trumpeted into the Cittadella's spacious auditorium by a troupe of olive-skinned young men dressed in medieval outfits and blowing four-foot horns as they stood below a fifteen-foot-square banner emblazoned with a stylized black-and-white panda—W.W.F.'s logo. Mayor Profumi, wearing the Italian colors on a sash and looking altogether happy, extended his town's official welcome to President Francesco Cossiga of Italy, who was seated on a thronelike chair between the two front rows of seats; to his royal guests, who included, besides Prince Philip, Sadruddin Aga Khan and princes of Belgium, Denmark, Nepal, and the Netherlands; and to the conference delegates—a thousand-odd scientists, educators, businessmen, and environmentalists. About two hundred members of the press were on hand, but they couldn't get near the delegates or the dignitaries. On the way in, they had been kept away by a stout rope, with several steely-eyed policemen on guard to make sure that no journalist got under the rope, or even close enough to it to talk to any notable on the other side. Once inside the hall, the reporters were seated in the balcony, far away from the ongoing chitchat of the delegates; they were not allowed to attend the daily W.W.F. luncheons, and they were even forbidden to ask questions in the question-and-answer periods that followed the presentations of the delegates' papers. All this caused tremendous consternation and resentment among the reporters, who had no way of reaching the delegates in town. W.W.F. had printed a list of the delegates' hotels but had declined to give reporters copies of it. Brief, formal press conferences with the speakers (these were conducted in Italian and English, as was the conference itself) were scheduled at the end of each of the morning and afternoon sessions, but in-depth interviews could not be conducted there—although, as things turned out, most of the people the reporters wanted to talk to weren't present at them anyway. Consequently, whenever the delegates stepped onto the esplanade outside the Cittadella during brief intermissions and lunch breaks, the reporters lunged at them like mad dogs, confirming the opinion already held by many of the conference leaders—including Philip, whose detestation of the press is legendary—that the fourth estate was a barely civilized subspecies to be kept at bay whenever possible.



Mayor Profumi was followed by the Italian Minister of the Environment, who spoke rather sleepily about the urgency of the world's ecological needs, after which Philip, wheezing slightly from a bad cold, talked about the good work W.W.F. had done in the past, and the economic and scientific imperatives that still had to be addressed. Unlike many of the speakers to follow, whose feelings about nature seemed to have been generated largely behind office desks, Philip spoke of environmental hazards with a warmth that appeared to be deeply felt—the genuine concern of someone who has spent much of his life tramping through beloved woods and fields. By way of defending the religious overtones of the conference to those who still objected to them, he said that the world could ignore the moral implications of its attitude toward nature only at its peril. The real task, he said, was to "convince the unconverted." Midway through the morning, Philip announced to the conferees the change in the organization's name. Henceforth, he said, it would be called the World Wide Fund for Nature, a name better suited to its broader ecological views.



Virtually every speaker who stepped up to the microphone mentioned St. Francis, quoted from the "Canticle of Brother Sun," or noted that the saint's attitude toward nature was a model that ought to be emulated today. Many of the speakers also alluded to the respectful attitude that various indigenous groups had toward nature, and suggested that more attention should be paid both to their philosophies and to their practical knowledge. "In the eyes of our native people . . . man is part of, and not antagonistic to, nature, functioning within and depending on nature," Charles Caccia, an M.P. from Canada and a well-known environmentalist, observed. "Indians on the British Columbia coast see life as a circle, along which living beings alternate, assuming different shapes, moving from human to nonhuman identities, in a close interrelationship which does not give man supremacy over nature." However, except for a seventy-two-year-old Maori priest named Sonny Waru—a huge, imposing man with long white hair who wore a bright-pink flowered shirt, purple bow tie, black bowler hat, and, on a string around his neck, a rattan-encased cigarette lighter alongside a whalebone tiki—there seemed to be no "native people" on hand. It would have been easy to overlook their absence if speakers had not constantly reminded the audience of it. (Such pronouncements lent a slightly schizophrenic air to the event—an air that a number of the delegates contributed to. One W.W.F. representative from Finland, for example, donned a colorful Lapp costume for Monday's ceremony at the basilica, though there were no Lapps included in the Finnish delegation.)

The lone religious leader invited to speak at the ecological conference—except for a brief cameo appearance made by the five together, to invite everybody to the service at the basilica—was Dr. Singh. Dr. Singh, whose topic was "The Ethics of Conservation," took up the question of nuclear weapons and argued forcefully for "a concerted commitment by governments, voluntary organizations, and individuals the world over to put a halt to a suicidal march towards terricide." In a gently reproving tone, he spoke of the "anthropocentricity" of modern civilization, and suggested, as some other speakers did, that the traditional Western, Judeo-Christian attitude toward the natural world, derived from the Biblical idea that man had "dominion" over nature, had led the West to feel that it had been given a kind of carte blanche to plunder the earth. He referred to this view as "the Cartesian-Newtonian-Marxist paradigm," and observed that "the underlying thesis of these great philosophies is the dualistic-materialistic philosophy that has so completely dominated Western civilization"—a philosophy that, he said, denied "the spiritual dimension to Mother Earth," so that she was viewed "as merely a material substance, to be manipulated at will."

It was more or less accepted as an article of faith at the conference that Eastern religions had a more holistic and respectful view of nature. But, tempting as it is to criticize the admittedly bad botch the industrial West has made of things, the lessons of history seem to point to a somewhat different conclusion—that it is not simply Judeo-Christian or Western societies that have plundered the earth

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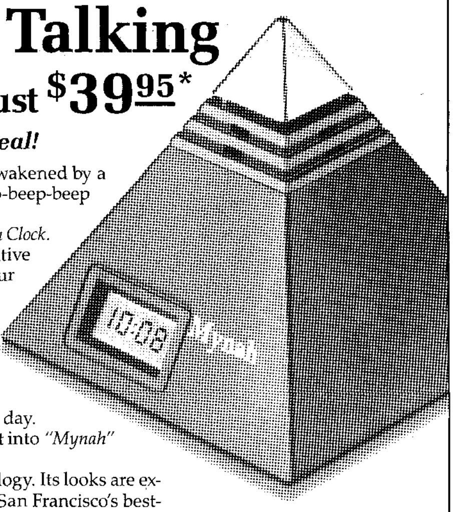
but, rather, the great majority of the world's powerful civilizations, East or West, modern or ancient. This bleaker view of environmental ethics was expressed (albeit in aid of a somewhat surprising optimism) by the microbiologist René Dubos in his book "A God Within." Dubos pointed out, "All over the globe and at all times in the past, men have pillaged nature and disturbed the ecological equilibrium, usually out of ignorance, but also because they have always been more concerned with immediate advantages than with long-range goals. . . . If men are more destructive now than they were in the past, it is because there are more of them and because they have at their command more powerful means of destruction, not because they have been influenced by the Bible." Nor did he feel that Oriental civilizations were more respectful of nature than Judeo-Christian civilizations. "China was far ahead of Europe in scientific and technological development until the seventeenth century A.D. and used technology on a massive and often destructive scale," he noted. "Many passages in T'ang and Sung poetry indicate that the barren hills of central and northern China were once heavily forested, and there is good reason to believe that there, as elsewhere, treelessness and soil erosion are results of fires and overgrazing. Even the Buddhists contributed largely to the deforestation of Asia in order to build their temples. . . . The Chinese attitude of respect for nature probably arose, in fact, as a response to the damage done in antiquity." Nevertheless, according to several of the religious leaders I talked with briefly on Saturday night (a few fifteen-minute interviews were granted to the press in the Istituto Teologico of the Sacro Convento), one of the conclusions they had come to at the retreat was that the Eastern view of man as part of a continuum was a healthy one for conservation. Even the normally skeptical Rabbi Hertzberg conceded that the insights of Eastern religions seemed particularly useful today. "I think we're in the throes of a paradigm shift," he said, gazing unhappily around the damp, bare little friary chamber. "As a result of the nuclear age, our collective global consciousness is simply going to have to change."

At one of the Friday press conferences, a reporter asked Philip why the W.W.F. parent body had not come out against nuclear power stations, which, the reporter noted, posed a hazard to the environment greater than that of many of the pollutants mentioned that day. Philip replied, somewhat impatiently, that W.W.F. International focussed its attention on existing problems rather than on situations that might or might not present "difficulties" in the future. This answer apparently so stunned the reporters, most of whom still had fresh memories of the Chernobyl accident and of the stories they had filed in its aftermath—about Italian lettuce and artichokes being taken off the market; about the piling up of banned beef, fruit, and even snails on railway sidings; about the concern over the health of the children in the countries affected by the accident—that there was no follow-up question.

The subject arose again, however, the next day, at the last session of the conference, which bore the title "How to Spread the Conservation Message to and by the Media." (The reporters considered this title hilarious. There had been so much grousing about their lack of access to the delegates that just before the final session the conservationist Russell Train, the former administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, who was chairing a press conference, said that the reporters were invited to join the delegates in the hall and would be recognized by the chairman if they wished to ask questions. "And that," he added, as a gracious fillip to the invitation, "includes the ladies!") Toward the end of the "media" session, Prince Philip announced that he had examined a *résumé* of the Italian press reaction to Friday's events and had been appalled to see that the nuclear-power issue was the only aspect of the conference that the Italians had really paid attention to, despite the many other important matters that had been discussed. He seemed genuinely put out. "If you remember, in the morning there was quite a lot said!" he exclaimed. "We had the Mayor, we had the Minister of . . . *thing*—we had quite an interesting session, really, all in all!" One of the Italian reporters observed in the question-and-answer period that many of the national branches of W.W.F., including the Italian one, did not share the parent body's sangfroid; the Italian branch, for example, had come out against nuclear power plants. Philip admitted that there was, in fact, some disagreement on the matter, and said that individual organizations were, of course, free to decide as they liked, but that he, for one, considered the alarm precipitate. "For example," he said, "there are lots of motor accidents in the world. Are we, therefore, to ban cars?"

Some observers considered Philip's attitude remarkable, in the face of Britain's own nuclear-power problems—problems that the British government itself remains remarkably sanguine about. There is a nuclear-fuel-reprocessing plant called Sellafield, on the coast of Cumbria, in the Lake District, which daily pumps a million gallons of water containing radioactive waste into the Irish Sea, where it drifts toward the Irish coast. Before Chernobyl, Sellafield was the largest known source of radioactive discharges on earth, and the Irish Sea is considered the most radioactive sea in the world. Since the plant has already discharged into the sea more than five hundred pounds of plutonium, which will remain highly radioactive for a quarter of a million years, it is likely to keep that dubious distinction for a long time. Despite the fact that cancer and Down's syndrome have reportedly been found to occur at elevated rates among children who live along the east coast of Ireland, despite the fact that children in the vicinity of Sellafield contract leukemia at ten times the national average, despite an increased rate of myeloma among people who live near Sellafield, and despite the fact that divers from Greenpeace, in an unsuccessful attempt to close the pipe, came upon some oily slime that turned out to be radioactive solvent that had been accidentally discharged into the sea, a government committee appointed to investigate the high incidence of leukemia issued a report in 1984 that offered "qualified reassurance" about the safety of the plant. The committee stressed that "an observed association between two factors does not prove a causal relationship." Since the report was issued, British Nuclear Fuels, which runs Sellafield, has admitted that the committee was mistakenly given figures that understated the amount of uranium released by the plant in the nineteen-fifties; the committee's chairman has defended his group's findings, but noted that some aspects of the problem warranted "further detailed study." In 1985, the European Parliament came within a hairsbreadth of passing a motion urging the immediate closure of the plant. But, so far, the British do not seem inclined to respond with



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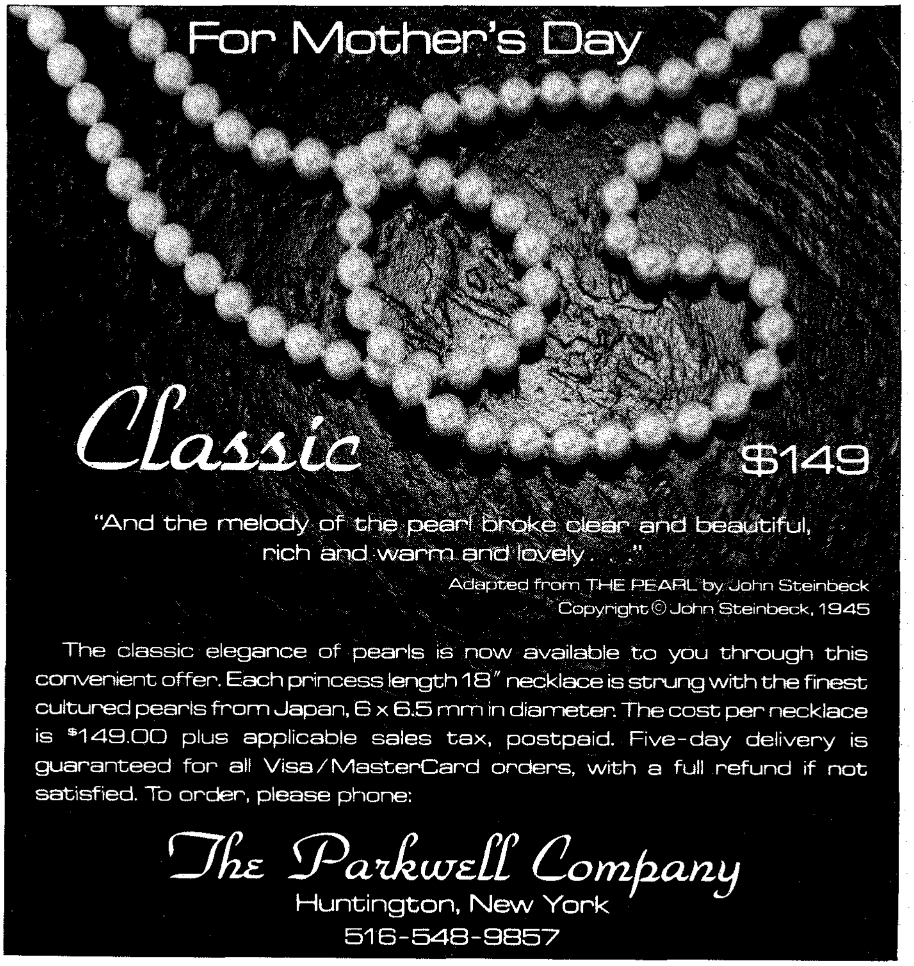

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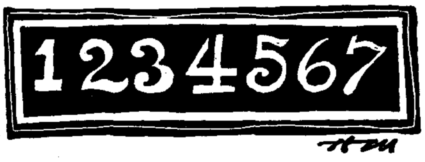
any vehemence to these warnings. There is a feeling among those acquainted with environmental matters that Britain's ongoing weak economy has created a consensus that the right thing to do is resist woolly-headed alarmists and let industry help Britain to help itself. Prince Philip could scarcely be blamed for his country's retrograde environmental policies, but his conservatism on such issues did little to enhance his credibility as a crusading environmentalist.

ON Friday evening, after a very good meal in one of Assisi's small trattorias, I made my way through the town's dark, twisting streets toward the lights on the Piazza del Comune, where *tutto* Assisi congregates in the evening. The Temple of Minerva, a first-century Roman building, is there, as is the Romanesque municipal tower, a rather comical-looking structure crowned by Ghibelline battlements. Assisi's town hall, formerly the Priors' Palace, is also there—a sober, undistinguished edifice that was begun in the fourteenth century and embellished somewhat haphazardly by various architects thereafter. The piazza's buildings, all of meticulously cut gray and pink stone and built to hold fast to the slopes of Mt. Subasio, reflected a diversity of architectural styles that was oddly cheering—a reminder of past efforts, exertions, and deeply contrasting predilections. As I settled down at a *caffè* to watch the passing parade, the whole piazza seemed to float dreamily in the cloud-filled night sky. At the very least, you could say of the piazza as a whole what the guidebook says of the town hall—that though it doesn't "represent a particularly high standard of architectural excellence, the general impression is pleasant."

The piazza's cobblestones were wet. It had rained all day—and would continue raining through the next day and a half. A quartet of elegantly dressed, boisterous English people appeared suddenly out of the blackness, filling the piazza with somewhat mirthless laughter, then disappeared into the entrance of a nearby hotel; a white-haired American cleric lurched tipsily by with a giggling, tousle-haired young woman on each arm; a man in a long tweed cloak, looking every inch the theatrical artiste, walked slowly past the *caffè* with a little white dog; an American Indian, with his hair in a ponytail, accompanied by two young men who appeared to be intimidated by him, sat down at a *caffè* table and stared sulkily at the patrons; and half a dozen leather-jacketed teen-agers on Suzuki motorcycles came roaring into the piazza and circled around and around, deafening everybody with the din of their motors. As I contemplated the thick, remarkably well-preserved Roman columns of the temple, I could only wonder whether Chesterton's theory, set forth in his biography of St. Francis, that the austerity of the Middle Ages in general and the innocence of Francis in particular represented a kind of final goodbye (a "purge of paganism") to Roman excess was as sound as I had once believed it to be.

THE delegates were addressed on Saturday afternoon by Dr. Wangari Maathai, the founder and guiding spirit of the Green Belt Movement—a Kenyan reforestation program that emphasizes working with local groups—and one of only two women invited to speak at the conference. (The other was Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, a Japanese writer whom the program notes were a little vague about—she was described as a "television personality"—and whose English skills turned out to be woefully inadequate to the task at hand.) Dr. Maathai, a bright-eyed, energetic, and quite beautiful black woman, was, by any standard, the most commanding speaker at the conference. She talked of the difficulty of spreading the conservation message to rural communities in her part of the world. To most Kenyans, she said, conservation seemed a preoccupation only of rich people, and a luxury that they themselves could ill afford; to illiterate rural folk, it was meaningless to speak of "desertification" or "soil erosion" or "genetic diversity." If, however, the message of conservation responded to a local need—for firewood, say, or water—people were more than willing to listen. The Green Belt Movement, she reported, had established tree nurseries throughout the country, and its representatives tell villagers that for every thousand trees they plant they will get a thousand-gallon water tank. Instead of delivering lectures about deforestation, the movement encourages villagers to plant more trees than they cut down. Families sometimes stay up all night in the fields at harvesttime to protect their crops—their one source of income—from what the conservationists call "wildlife;" instead of telling them not to kill these animals, the government finds reasonable compromises. If, for example, someone's cow is killed by a hyena, Dr. Maathai said, the government pays a compensation to the cow's owner.



Dr. Maathai also suggested that the message of conservation be made plain to the leaders of rural communities. It might take the decision-makers a long time before their commitment got beyond the rhetorical stage, "but even that verbal commitment is essential." Unfortunately, the people most profoundly resistant to indigenously supported conservation efforts were the privileged, she said, because "in many instances the plundering of the environment is being done either by them or for them." Smiling pleasantly at the assembled delegates, Dr. Maathai observed that decision-makers and politicians ought to realize that "it is in their interest to take care of the environment." And she concluded, "A desertified country is worthless to the rich and the poor alike, and many political refugees are, indirectly, environmental refugees. It is so much easier and more pleasant to rule a comparatively happy society—so much more pleasant to use arms to fight external enemies rather than maintain domestic suppression, because when too many of the citizens become impoverished and hungry they become ungovernable except through the gun."

Dr. Maathai's directness, and her focus on the perspective and needs of the poor and undernourished of her part of the world, made me think of Chesterton's analysis of the character of St. Francis. In truth, the constant invoking of St. Francis at the conference, especially as a prelude to or wrapup for a particularly arid speech, was dispiriting. Chesterton points out in his admiring biography that Francis was rash and radical—a man who left his comfortable family home to help lepers and move among the poor; who "flung himself into fasting and vigil exactly as he had flung himself furiously into battle; and who rejected even the enclosed life of the monastery and became . . . a wanderer because it gave him more freedom." He was born into a world that, as Chesterton notes, was guided by a tight network of feudal and familial forms of dependence. "The whole idea

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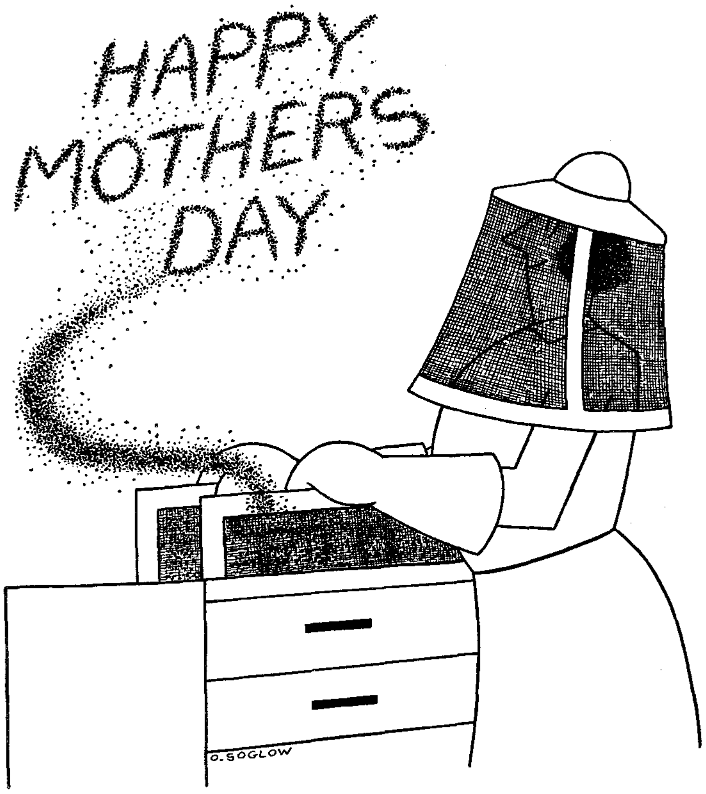

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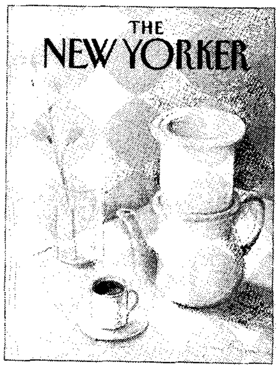

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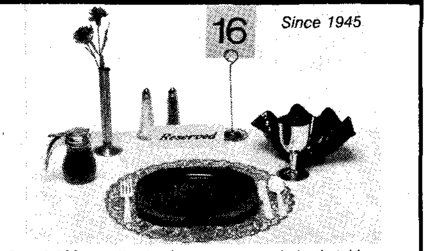

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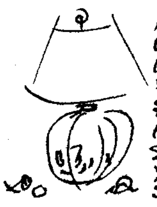

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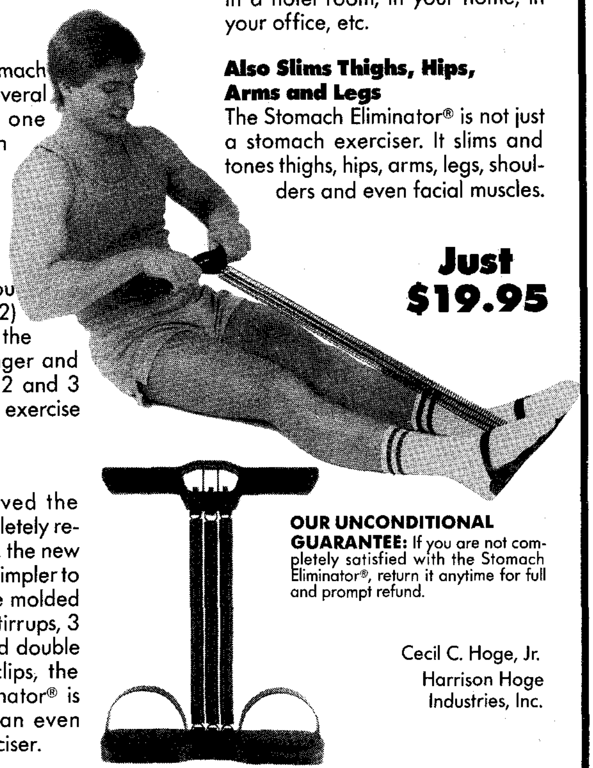
of St. Francis was that the Little Brothers"—as his followers were called—"should be like little fishes who could go freely in and out of that net. They could do so precisely because they were small fishes and in that sense even slippery fishes. There was nothing that the world could hold them by; for the world catches us mostly by the fringes of our garments." Francis rarely went about things in a conventional way. To found his order, he ought to have sought permission from his local bishop. Instead, accompanied by eleven ragtag companions, he presented his petition to Pope Innocent III before a conclave of cardinals in Rome. Quite a few of his contemporaries thought Francis was crazy. It was probably easy to believe that of a man who "tried to end the Crusades by talking to the Saracens [and] interceded with the Emperor for the birds." As the centuries have rolled on, however, St. Francis has become harder to sneer at. In fact, his love and respect for the natural world and his social compassion have made him something of a hero of humanism—even, as Chesterton puts it, "a sort of morning star of the Renaissance." One could only wonder what Francis might think of a convocation attended by six princes of the blood, at which calamitous, and even irreversible, natural disasters were referred to by every second speaker and words like "ecocide" were common parlance.

On Sunday, delegates and reporters were invited to join the ranks of some thousand ecological and religious pilgrims on a nature march. The marchers, who represented religious and environmental groups from thirty countries, had travelled on foot, some as far as forty-five miles, to the towns of Cortona, Gubbio, Nocera Umbra, and Spoleto. From there, they were to converge at Assisi, winding their way through the streets of the town to end their journey at the steps of the basilica. I decided to join a large group of pilgrims coming from the north at a rendezvous point near the village of Piano della Pieve. Several buses had been chartered to convey people to this spot, which was several miles outside town. It was still raining lightly. A relatively small number of delegates chose to take advantage of the arrangements, and as I wandered along the side of the road, admiring the silvery olive trees at the point where the pilgrims were to appear, I wondered why more delegates had not shown up for what promised to be a colorful event. As soon as the marchers came in sight—banging drums, blowing trumpets, waving banners and placards, and singing "We Shall Overcome" in Italian—the reason for the meagre showing of delegates seemed clear: this was not their crowd. Many of the pilgrims wore sky-blue-and-white tabards printed on the front with a bright-yellow circle (Brother Sun) and on the back with a cream-colored one (Sister Moon). Some carried banners emblazoned with tigers, pandas, swans, butterflies, or doves. Others carried flags with messages or logos: "PLANTS ARE OUR LIFE BLOOD," "INDIA CARES FOR ANIMALS," "W.W.F.," "PEACE," "THE WILDFLOWER TRUST." Even after their long walk (they had come some eleven miles since morning), the marchers were overflowing with a vitality that one could not help contrasting with the fatigued air of the conference hall and the guarded worldliness of the religious leaders.

Sir Edmund Hillary, the conqueror of Everest, was one of the conference delegates who *had* chosen to join the pilgrimage. W.W.F. claims him as an "Ad Personam Member" of its International Council. A tall man with formidable eyebrows and oddly expressionless blue eyes, Sir Edmund inspired many jokes about how he might be managing the steep ascent to Assisi. I caught up with him as he joined a group of W.W.F. staff people, and asked him what he thought of the Assisi event. It was fine that "just anyone" could attend a W.W.F. conference nowadays, he said, though he believed that it was "the influential people" who effected policy changes, because they "made change respectable." He remarked on the world's growing interest in environmental problems. "Thirty-three years ago, when we climbed Everest, we had no awareness of conservation, really," he said. "We just heaved our stuff up there and left it. As far as I know, it's still there."

Some took it as a significant sign that just as the march approached the Porta Perlici, the northern gate of the city, the rain stopped, a great wind came up, and all the colorful flags, banners, and wind socks began to flap furiously. The sun appeared for the first time since the anniversary celebration had begun. When the procession arrived, an old man perched on the gate rang an ancient bell, a musician sounded a deep Tibetan horn, and nine drummers from Assisi played a welcoming roll or two. Once inside, the pilgrims had to tighten their ranks sharply to squeeze through the narrow streets. At the Piazza del Comune, they paused briefly while the Mayor, who found himself more or less face to face with a gigantic papier-mâché parrot and two larger-than-life roosters, offered a welcome from the steps of the Temple of Minerva. From there to the basilica, the pilgrims had to compress themselves even more drastically to pass through serpentine streets now lined with hordes of not particularly friendly townsfolk. (The undisguised hostility in the eyes of the villagers as the procession passed, and the refusal of several mothers to let their small children accept the colorful "*marce per la natura*" stickers that the pilgrims were distributing like candy, confirmed my suspicions about the Vatican's resistance to this conference.) As the line of marchers drew near a phalanx of paparazzi, one of the W.W.F. officials left his place among the spectators, snatched a banner from a young girl, and, smiling magnificently, joined the pilgrims as they snaked along past the photographers toward the Piazza Superiore di San Francesco and the basilica. On the great lawn in front of the church, about twenty athletic-looking pilgrims unfurled a gigantic gold nylon parachute (Brother Sun again), and another, slightly smaller white one (Sister Moon), which they raised and lowered and twirled around and around—halftime at the Environment Bowl.

The pilgrims had originally been invited, by formal printed cards from H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, to a "picnic reception" in the gardens of the basilica, but the event was relocated at the last minute to the nearby crypt of the Abbey of San Pietro, because the rain had made the grass too wet. Many people misunderstood the change in plans and thought that they were supposed to eat their box suppers in the crypt of St. Francis, the site of the tomb that holds the saint's mortal remains; they began shuffling into the basilica in somewhat alarming numbers, until a horrified sexton posted someone at the door to redirect everyone to the abbey, up the street. The abbey crypt had a certain spooky charm but provided few chairs. Too exhausted to eat standing up, most of the pilgrims flopped down on the stone floor, and some even curled up and



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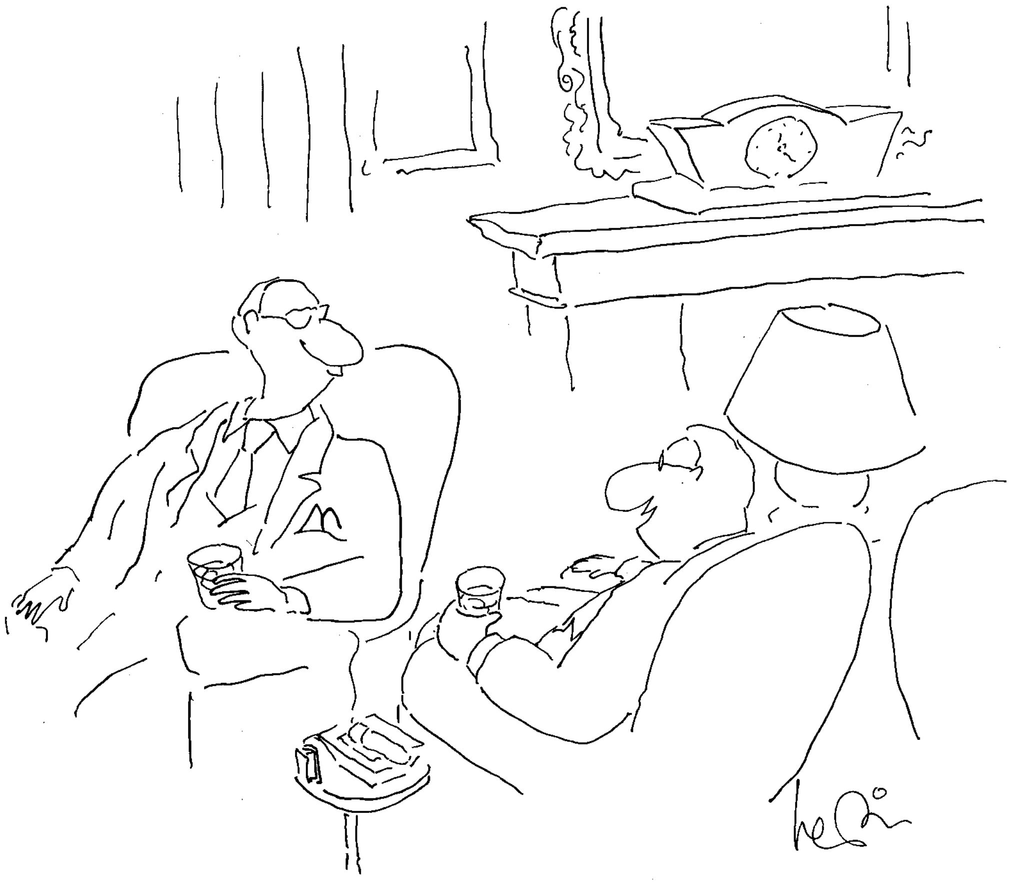
went to sleep there—not, however, before they had limped past a formal reception line of elegantly clad dignitaries, Prince Philip and Dr. Singh among them.

Later that evening, I ran into Rabbi Hertzberg on the Via Frate Elia, a busy shopping thoroughfare near the basilica. He was accompanied by a clutch of policemen, and looked very much like a lifer who had just made it over the wall of the Big House. He had been allowed out, he said, to have dinner with Prince Philip. When I inquired about the days' activities, he said that the leaders were trying to find ways to disseminate to their people back home some of what they'd learned, and that they were still getting on remarkably well and certainly had had their ecological consciousnesses raised. He also told me that he had been wrong about Dr. Nasseef's absence: Dr. Nasseef had been in Moscow, discussing the rights of Muslims in Russia; he had shown up early that morning and would participate in the ceremony the next day.

THE Religion & Nature Interfaith Ceremony at the basilica on Monday morning started promptly at a quarter past ten. An expensively printed program explained that the ceremony had been "designed" by an "international liturgy working party" brought together by ICOREC, Martin Palmer's group, and stage-directed by two volunteers from the Royal Shakespeare Company. Among the ceremony's patrons were the Regional Government of Umbria, Camping Fontemaggio, Firefly Productions, Livraghi–Ogilvy & Mather, the Italian Ministry of Defense–Army, Martini & Rossi, Determined Productions, and the President and government of Zambia.

The event was heralded by more Assisi trumpets and Swiss and Tibetan horns, and opened officially with a procession of religious and secular notables, led by Philip, which started out at the Sacro Convento and ended inside the nave of the basilica. On the piazza in front of the basilica, Sonny Waru, "on behalf of the indigenous peoples and cultures of the world," offered Philip a Maori challenge by laying a green twig at his feet as a symbol of peace. Philip picked it up, and, with a somewhat embarrassed grin, leaned forward and touched noses with the Maori priest. (This was a far more agreeable version of the challenge than the one offered Prince Philip and Queen Elizabeth the preceding March, when they visited New Zealand. Three women and a man, expressing anger at Britain's non-ratification of the Treaty of Waitangi, which was signed in 1840 and gave the Maori guarantees regarding their lands, possessions, and rights as British subjects, had dropped their pants and exposed their buttocks in the course of a state visit to the city of Christchurch. This insult, known as a *whakapohane*, had also been offered to the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1983, on a similar occasion.) According to the program notes, Reverend Waru's challenge went beyond the traditional role of establishing whether or not a visitor was friendly: "The challenge is that [conservationists] and the major faiths and cultures of the world should take seriously the perspectives and values which the indigenous peoples of the world have to offer on how we should live with and in nature. His Royal Highness accepts the challenge on behalf of all the representatives." Just before the procession entered the basilica, a muezzin called upon all assembled to pause for a moment of silent reflection while he chanted a passage from the Koran. It began, "Behold! In the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of the night and day are signs for men of understanding."



"I do have an embarrassment of riches. Oddly, however, I'm not at all embarrassed by it."

Normally, the basilica's beautiful Giotto frescoes, depicting the life of St. Francis, are extremely difficult to see, because of the church's poor lighting. Now, however, the church was ablaze with television lights (the ceremony was being beamed, via satellite, around the world), and Giotto's delicate blue skies and purple cloaks leaped forth—not altogether agreeably—in almost Disney-like living color. The opening procession was ushered in by the strains of the Hundred and Forty-eighth Psalm, a full-throttled hymn of praise to God the Creator, set to music by the modern British composer Ilona Sekacz. Father Serrini, looking somewhat abashed, welcomed everybody, and explained that although the ceremony would consist of five separate liturgies, each of them would "celebrate the dignity of nature and the duty of every person to live harmoniously within the natural world." Father Serrini's welcoming words

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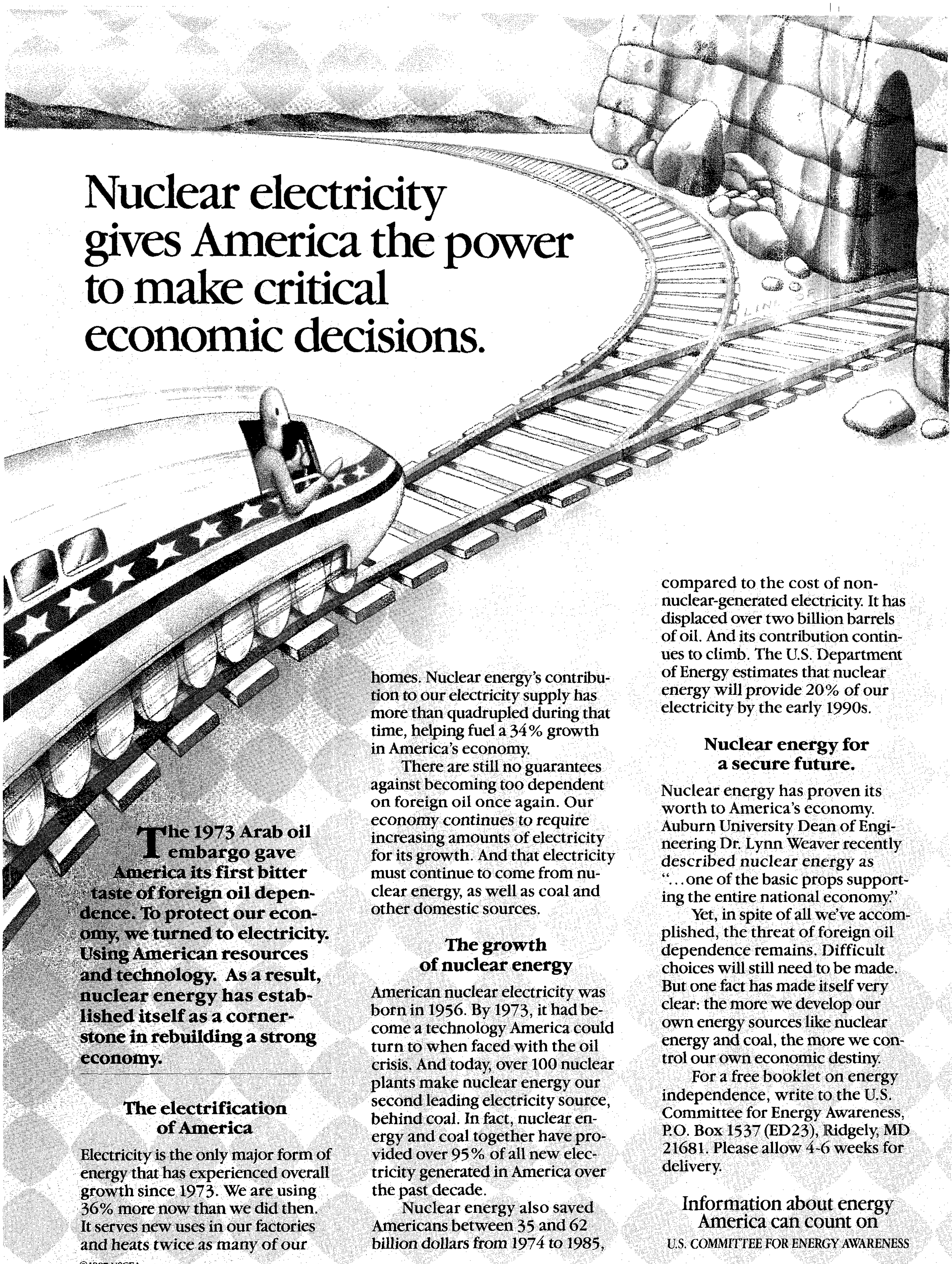

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were followed by a Hindu dance of creation, performed by Dr. Yamini Krishnamurti, India's leading temple dancer. Dr. Krishnamurti, a curvaceous, solidly built woman, was swathed in scarves, jewels, and spangles, and she performed her dance with such absolute authority, sinuous movements, and frank evocation of earthly fecundity that, ecumenism notwithstanding, some of the young Tibetan monks and Franciscans sitting nearby apparently felt compelled to lower their eyes.

There followed a section of the ceremony billed as Repentance, in which the leaders asked forgiveness for any harm that had thus far been inflicted on nature. Rabbi Hertzberg blew a shofar on the steps of the basilica (he had been asked to blow it inside but had declined), as a symbolic call to the world to recognize that it had failed to care enough about nature, and, as he explained in a statement directly afterward, to "start afresh." After the rabbi returned to his seat in the basilica, the Venerable, accompanied by three Buddhist priests, chanted the Song of the Prayer for Truth, a text written by the Dalai Lama: more deeply growled "oh"s and "ah"s, this time so sternly mournful that the brightly lit, jewel-like church suddenly seemed almost frivolous. He was dressed in gold-and-burgundy ceremonial robes and wore a yellow-and-orange helmet that curved in a peak just in front of his brow—a costume that transformed him from a cloud into a warrior. In translation, the "oh"s and "ah"s read, in part, "Please pacify the uninterrupted miseries and unbearable fears, such as famines and sicknesses, that torment powerless beings completely oppressed by inexhaustible and violent evils, and henceforth lead us from suffering states and place us in an ocean of happiness and joy." Dr. Nasseef, whom most people here were seeing for the first time, was a sober-looking man whose gray beard made him look much older than his forty-odd years. He threw himself into his part of the Repentance section of the liturgy, which consisted of the reading of a passage from the Koran about the fall of Adam and Eve, with what seemed to be great enthusiasm.

The ceremony reached a kind of climax about three-quarters of the way through, in a section called Celebration. At this point, pilgrims in bluejeans, sweatshirts, and Brother Sun and Sister Moon tabards, and carrying banners emblazoned with religious symbols, marched down a side aisle and took their places next to the religious leaders, who thereupon read statements that explained why their several faiths cared about the natural world and described the role men and women should play in it. Then the Heritage Singers of Zambia, sixteen young men and women with small, shining faces, sang, accompanied by drummers, a light-filled and joyous modern arrangement of the "Canticle of Brother Sun."

Although it was clear that most of the people assembled in the basilica loved a good party and any amount of ceremony, a moment of awkwardness occurred when silver-and-green *rakshas* (Indian bracelets, decorated with a plastic W.W.F. panda and the logo "Assisi-W.W.F., 1986") were distributed and everyone was asked by Philip to tie one on his or her neighbor's wrist. Turning to smile at Dr. Singh, he explained, "This is a Hindu custom that takes place at the festival of Raksha Bandham, when sisters tie these bracelets onto the arms of the man in the family who protects them. It says that while you protect me physically, I protect you spiritually. . . . When you tie a *raksha* onto your neighbor's wrist, and receive one in return, you are expressing the message that the conservation of nature depends on the coöperation of all people, and that it can only be achieved by a combination of practical measures and emotional commitment." Everybody did as instructed, with the air of polite guests seeing some necessary foolishness through.

Things perked up a bit at the end of the ceremony, after everyone had left the church and the religious leaders, holding rolled-up copies of their official declarations and looking extraordinarily fraternal, waved down at the crowd from an opening in the side tower of the basilica known as the Pope's balcony. The declarations themselves proved to be disappointingly bland reiterations of religious orthodoxy which probably said more about the wide spectrum of co-religionists who would be scrutinizing them than about the thoughts and feelings of each of the leaders at Assisi. It was rumored that the Muslim and Christian statements had been approved by higher authorities (the Muslim document in Mecca, the Christian one in Rome), but, whether they had or not, neither contained any phrase that was likely to offend any-

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one, nor did either make mention of anything the leaders had learned from each other during their retreat, the reason being, it later turned out, that the statements had been written before they met.

At the last press conference, which was held in a small meeting room in the Sacro Convento immediately after the leaders came down from the balcony, Prince Philip expressed satisfaction with the way things had gone. When asked by reporters for examples of concrete steps that might be taken as a result of what had happened in Assisi, he replied that such steps would remain to be seen, but that the conference had paved the way for them. The anniversary events had obviously made his cold worse, and he looked extremely tired. The reporters wanted to know whether there had been any less general point of agreement. Looking longingly toward the door, Philip replied that the one point everybody concurred in was that "men and women aren't subjectors but guardians of nature, and that everyone should, uh, go home and reflect about what they have seen and heard."

Indeed, a mass exodus from town soon began, although the "conservation festival" of music, folklore, and theatrical presentations was rolling steadily along and would continue through the evening. Delegates rushed out of hotels to pile heavy suitcases into the trunks of cars, backpackers trudged toward chartered buses, and a surging crowd of journalists, delegates, and environmental junketeers besieged desk clerks for help with local transportation—help that, for the most part, the clerks were unable to provide. Few taxis were available, and the competition for them was fierce.

BY midafternoon, the streets had become less clogged, though they still held a great many people lugging suitcases. Across from my hotel, on the Piazza San Pietro, someone was playing a flute. The music bore a strong resemblance to that of the American jazz flutist Hubert Laws—it was pure, lyrical, and highly contemporary. The sound of the flute sailed out over the piazza, up toward the Cittadella conference hall a short distance away, and out over the basilica and the pale-green Umbrian hills. Nobody I asked seemed to know anything about the young man playing, except that he was English. When he took a brief break, I asked him his name. He said that it was Tim Wheater, and that he had

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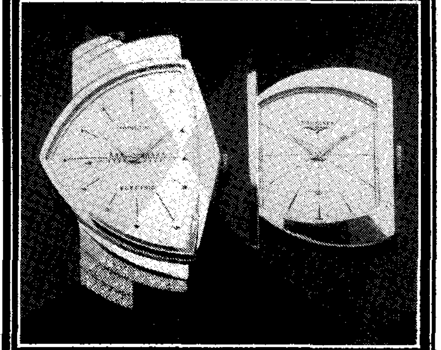

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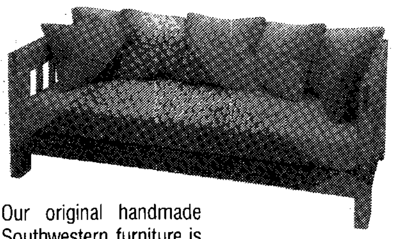

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been invited to Assisi, he thought, to "represent New Age music." He handed me a card before climbing back on the wooden platform where he had been performing. The card said, unhelpfully, "Imagemaker, Sound and Vision: Directors—Tim Wheater, Wendy Burrows," and gave an address on the Albert Embankment, in London. A young woman standing nearby announced that the next song he would play was called "Awakening." The song was so beautiful that everybody within earshot couldn't help pausing to listen, and just about all activity in the piazza came to a halt. Conservatively dressed transcontinental ecocrats, momentarily forgetting their next appointments, put down their suitcases and gazed thoughtfully at Tim Wheater and his flute. Wheater was dressed in a mod, narrow-lapelled gray suit, wore pale-gray space shoes, and had a shiny bald pate. The difference in world views expressed by his costume and those of the listening delegates was, for the moment, of no importance. For the first time since the conference began, delegates, pilgrims, journalists, monks, and townspeople stood within spitting distance of each other, apparently oblivious of the realities that separated them. Many people, as they listened, looked past Wheater—at a distant spire, the hills, the place where, far away, the tops of the trees blurred into the sky. All at once, everyone seemed to be connected to the Umbrian stones and hills rather than accidentally consigned to them.

The history and physical reality of Assisi seemed to converge at that moment, and every leaf, stone, and building stood out with great distinctness. I remembered Chesterton's rather peculiar remark that "St. Francis was not a lover of nature," which when I first read it had struck me as more flamboyant than true. Now it struck me as exactly right. What Chesterton meant, and goes on to explain, was that the phrase "lover of nature" implies "accepting the material universe as a vague environment, a sort of sentimental pantheism"—something, in short, that a hermit (or a modern city dweller) might love as background. But for St. Francis "nothing was ever in the background. . . . He saw everything as dramatic, distinct from its setting, not all of a piece like a picture but in action like a play. A bird went by him like an arrow. . . . A bush could stop him like a brigand."

—LIS HARRIS

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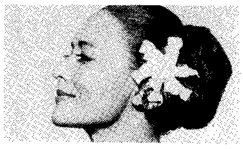

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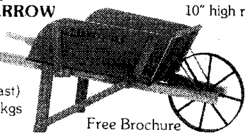

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BOOKS

Kingsley Amis

IN his new novel, "The Old Devils" (Summit; $16.95), Kingsley Amis returns to the comedy of "Lucky Jim," but thirty or forty years on. The setting is South Wales, and the time has come for sizing up the traditional state of culture shock in which Celt and Saxon are entangled: where the Saxon is blunt, the singsong Celt is carried away by his imagination and his secretiveness. Times have changed for both parties to the intrigue. They are seen on private journeys from late middle age to old age, and facing social change. The coal miners' cottages are now often occupied by weekenders; hotels are tarted up for tourists. Italian and Indian restaurants now put one Welsh dish on their menus. Where is the old, "authentic" Wales?

The novel opens with two diverting and matching scenes. In the first we see a group of aging men, friends since their schooldays, proud of their sporting history, who regularly meet in an underheated, more or less private room at a pub called for some conjectural historical reason the Bible & Crown. Dedicated whiskey drinkers, some of the friends are enormously overweight, so that getting up from a chair when it is their turn to "shout" for another round is agony. The old devils grunt in the insinuating silences between their talk, which is mostly about their illnesses, the state of their bowels, and the pills they have taken. Two of them are mildly scholars; one owns a tavern; another works at a tinplate mill on the coast; another is a builder—but only of grandiose town halls. An item of news is released—perhaps not startling news, for what counts in suspicious Wales is "not what you knew but who could prove you knew it": a famous Welshman, the TV star Alun Weaver, and his wife, Rhiannon, have come back from years of success in London to live in their native town. How will they settle in? Hasn't he made a fortune by his talks on the box about the most famous of all Welsh poets, Brydan (who is probably drawn from Dylan Thomas), and by selling Welsh culture short to the vulgar British and the credulous Americans? Was Brydan a saint or a fraud? Was he authentic? Has Alun Weaver, a minor poet himself, cleverly got on the bandwagon of a dead man's fame? Alun is handsome; in his time, he was the best-known local Don Juan. And what about his delightful wife? There was a disastrous scandal when she was a student and had to leave the town because she had been obliged to have an abortion. Her lover was not Alun Weaver, and now the matter is forgotten—times have changed. Still, to have married the slippery Alun Weaver!

While the corpulent old devils are at the Bible & Crown, the same news is being discussed by their wives and others at what is notionally "a coffee morning" in Sophie Norris's spacious drawing room, near the golf links. Coffee cups are more or less untouched. Ashtrays are filled with cigarette ends, and the ladies are drinking glass after glass of Soave Superiore, and moving on to Pinot Chardonnay. Before long, they will be more than eying a magnum of Orvieto. There are few silences at the ladies' party. One tipsy lady, Dorothy, is ruining their chance of going over the burning question of how Alun Weaver and his wife will "settle down" by going on about her trip to Russia and her discovery that the Welsh, Russian, and Red Indian languages have much in common because they have an aversion to the verb "to be." Sophie, the hostess, sees that the lady must be stopped but muddles it:

> Dorothy's heavy-duty mode took an appreciable time to come round from, so that when she paused for a second or two, as she did after the Red Indians, nobody had anything to say at first, until Sophie just scraped in on the last of the amber by asking to hear about the trip to Leningrad.

We realize that Sophie, who when she was young was known as "one of the surest things between Bridgend and Carmarthen," is not bright. Note: "the amber" is the British name for the yellow, warning traffic light. That image is a key to the shock effect of Amis's elaborate prose and his comedy. He has a wicked love of organizational verbiage. States of feeling are evoked as "areas;" if conventional, they will be called "standard." Confidences become "soft-soap sessions." For Amis, language has the ongoing, short-cut know-how, the echo of traffic, but is not for that reason to be despised. He is far from being facetious. His genius may owe something to the ornate Kipling. One of Amis's characters enjoys Kipling's word "frowsty" as a state of

"He's wooing the press."

mind, and would echo Kipling's "A good cigar is a smoke." And Amis has Wodehouse's gift for spinning out strings of malign afterthoughts. Evoking the marriage of one of the old Welsh devils and an Englishwoman noted for her plainspoken, down-putting Yorkshire manner and her scorn for Welsh evasion, he writes:

> After all these years they really understood each other very well. Her saying that in an ordinary tone meant that hostilities were suspended and more, that that subject was now free, cleared for bringing up at any later stage without penalty. Further yet, as might not have been instantly clear to anyone but him, it constituted an apology, or the nearest she was ever going to get to one.

The return of the Weavers does stir up memories of tender feelings in one or two of the old devils. The narrative breaks up into a number of journeys about Wales in which the characters are revisiting sentimental scenes of their youth. The gentle Malcolm, who years ago was in love with Rhiannon, takes a trip with her along the coast to a spot where they had had a tender meeting. She breaks into tears —because he remembers it all and she does not. Young people nowadays, she reflects, can do what they like, but in her time they couldn't. Alun Weaver's trips are very different. His exploits as a Don Juan have their ad-hoc leaps into the unintended. They are matters of nerve. For example, he takes it into his head to drop in on his old flame Sophie. She has a talent for educated abuse. His vanity is flattered: insults are a good sign. Almost without a word, the seduction takes place. We don't see it; we know it has happened because he asks how much time they have left and because she returns to milder insult as they are saying goodbye. Even better, we know it by his reflection:

> All sorts of stuff, for instance what had been taking place a little earlier, seemed much as before, or at any rate not different enough to start making a song and dance about. . . . The most noticeable characteristic of the past, as seen by him, at least, was that there was so much more of it now than formerly, with bits that were longer ago than had once seemed possible.

At the center of the novel is Alun Weaver travelling with a disorderly party to Birdarthur to see the tomb of Brydan. The beautiful village is packed with gift shops in vulgar exploitation of the poet's fame. Here, self-deceived and now anxious, Weaver tries to settle to serious, honest writing. The old scholarly Charlie

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author of *Heart of the Country*

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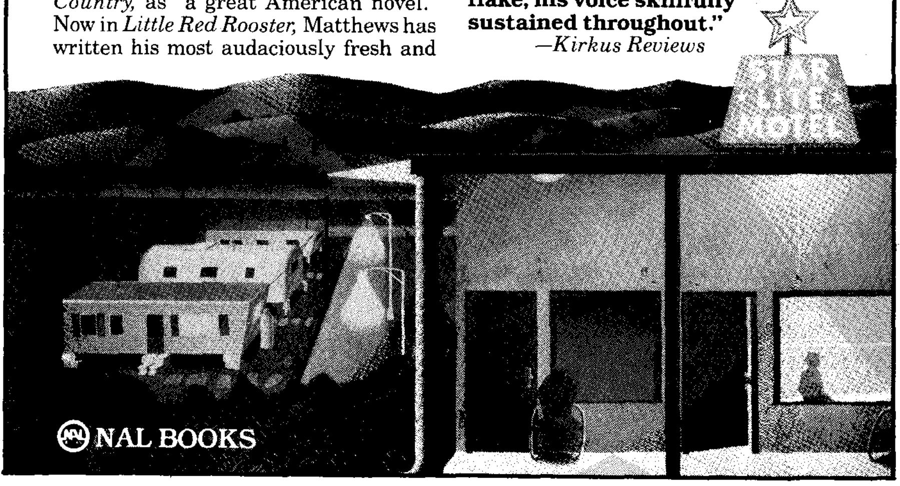
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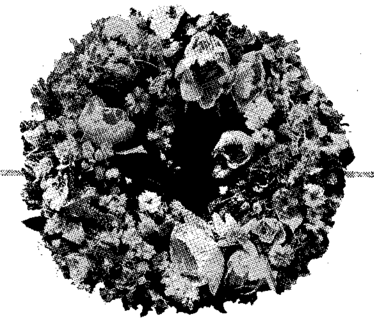

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tells him firmly that he has no talent: his love of public performance, his identification with Brydan have destroyed it. While Weaver struggles to write, Dorothy, the most demonstrative of drinkers, is causing trouble in the village. Night has come, and, to add to the general anxiety, Charlie vanishes. There is a search. The old gentleman is found at last, having got lost on his way home—he has been afraid of the dark all his life! Indeed, when found, he collapses with what looks like a stroke. It isn’t, but there is a warning here for the sporting old devils: someone will certainly die.

There is a violent and confused row at the Bible about an official document issued by the Lower Glamorgan Water Authority—a row in which Alun Weaver is asked “what he meant by it, who he thought he was talking to and similar questions,” and is attacked as “a second-rate bloody ersatz Brydan.” Then Tarc, the publican, shouts, “Out, the bloody lot of you. . . . Starting with you, Squire Weaver. . . . I’ve been dying to get rid of you buggers for years.” He means it. He is sick of them. Out they go. Learned old Charlie sees the whole thing as grand opera in German: “In a ritualistic monologue of great power and beauty (*‘Heraus sie alles sofortig’*) Tarc invokes his immemorial right to banish the Ancients from their refuge, ordains and salutes their passing one by one and compels the removal of their age-old trophies.” The Irish see themselves as saints; the Welsh see themselves as operatic giants. The old devils drift off to a freezing ill-lit house filled with ghastly dusty portraits and a virtual library of bottles of strong drink. Here Alun Weaver quietly, almost decently, raises a glass to his lips and, in the most authentic manner, drops dead in front of them.

“The Old Devils” is crowded with people who are keenly watching one another, who know one another well, but who give away as little as possible about themselves, who love to live as rumors. A crowded grand finale is necessary. What better than the classic deflating fête champêtre of a wedding under the changing Welsh sky, in which the younger generation warn their wayward elders about their behavior; in which in-laws meet new in-laws, with scornful eyes on one another; and in which old passions are recalled. Alun Weaver’s widow, the beautiful Rhiannon, will meet again the man she really loved years before. That scolding, snobbish Yorkshire wife will walk out on her Welsh husband and go back to England, where people are plain and straightforward and know how to boss their garden plants, and where women have given up the non-U and ridiculous custom of wearing their best hats at weddings or funerals. Connoisseurs of weddings will note the maneuvers that occur when photographers try in vain to get the crowd in some sort of sheeplike order—an “area” that is distinctly not “standard.” (The indispensable whispered arrangement about the cost of the wedding is very funny indeed.) And the novel ends with the sight of the poetic Malcolm sitting down to work on his translation of a long poem by Cynddelw Mawr ap Madog Wladaidd (c. 1320-?1388)—“more of an adaptation, actually,” for in it he is making Rhiannon the central figure: a tribute, because if she has not given him love she has given him a poem. Kipling, who had his sentiments about a gallant tradition, would have approved. And so would Wodehouse. The old, robust masculine tradition of British comedy from Fielding and Smollett continues in our own vernacular.

—V. S. PRITCHETT

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

FADING, MY PARMACHEENE BELLE, by Joanna Scott (Ticknor & Fields; $17.95). The dust jacket features a marvellous surreal fish lure: feathers and bristles in the middle, a hook at one end, and the head and arms of a woman at the other. A Parmacheene Belle is “the most taking fly,” the old angler whose story this is explains at the outset; he attends his wife’s funeral with one pinned to his cap. A few hours later, he runs away: from an empty house and an idiot son, and from talk of a nursing home. His “travelling partner upstream,” as he puts it, is a teen-age runaway he calls—scornfully, at first—a “mermaiden.” At times, the narrative drifts and snags, but Joanna Scott recovers control each time, and reels in, at the end, a memorable first novel.

THE NEWTON LETTER, by John Banville (Godine; $12.95). A short novel—little more than a long story—that tells a not entirely unfamiliar kind of tale. An Irish scholar, its narrator, rents a summer cottage on a nursery farm not far from Dublin in expectation of sufficient peace and quiet to finish an ambitious book about Isaac Newton, but he hardly puts pen to paper. Instead, he finds himself first curious about and then deeply and bewilderedly involved with the enigmatic residents there—a middle-aged woman and her older, alcoholic husband, the woman's twenty-four-year-old niece, and a little boy. Mr. Banville is a savory writer—a writer of imaginative heart and mind—and his brief novel has a vigorous identity.

FLIPPING FOR IT, by Daniel Asa Rose (St. Martin's; $14.95). "Heads I Win, Tails You Lose," Thomas's best friend's T-shirt says. "Can't we just be very close friends?" Thomas's wife says. "I don't mean *who* is he, I mean who *is* he," Thomas's five-year-old son says. "He" is a florist whose off-color eloquence on the subject of stamens and pistils has inspired Thomas's wife to file for divorce. By the end of the last chapter, "Week Number Four," Thomas has lost twenty pounds, the five-year-old has lost faith in the tooth fairy, and a divorce lawyer has failed to win his client's case. Mr. Rose, a seasoned writer of short fiction, verges on bathos when he conjures up children, asleep or at play; but most of this, his first novel is intentionally funny, and painfully so.

NOTE: "Chroma," a collection of stories by Frederick Barthelme, has been published by Simon & Schuster ($15.95). Some of the stories first appeared in *The New Yorker.*

GENERAL

WHERE IS NICARAGUA?, by Peter Davis (Simon & Schuster; $18.95). This illuminating report tells us what a gifted journalist saw and heard on two visits to Nicaragua, in 1983 and 1986. Mr. Davis portrays a capital in ruins (Managua has not been rebuilt since the earthquake of 1972), tropical countryside, towns that look unchanged since the days of Spanish rule, and a population divided and confused about the Sandinista government and the Reagan Administration. He avoids polemics: we hear what he is told and what other people say, think, or claim. Through him American readers can appreciate the effect of Sandinista and American policies on a range of Nicaraguan men and women—priests, peasants, businessmen, politicians, teachers—with diverse experiences and responses.

MONTY: FINAL YEARS OF THE FIELD MARSHAL, 1944-1976, by Nigel Hamilton (McGraw-Hill; $29.95). This third, and concluding, volume of the definitive biography describes a "sacred monster" growing more monstrous. Mr. Hamilton believes that Bernard Law Montgomery, Field Marshal and Viscount, was *the* Allied military genius of the Second World War. He was also a spiteful intriguer. In the years after the war, his personal life was a series of betrayals and rejections, and his public career was unsuccessful. Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer called him the worst Chief of the Imperial General Staff—his first postwar job—in fifty years, because he was unable to function collegially. In his tour as the Western Union's Chairman (1948-51), he feuded with the French Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces, de Lattre de Tassigny, and, Mr. Hamilton suspects, contributed to de Gaulle's later decision to take France out of NATO, the Union's heir. Montgomery next became Eisenhower's deputy at NATO; as in the Second World War, Eisenhower was able to contain his subordinate's machinations, but when he retired to seek the Presidency Montgomery made war on the new commander, General Ridgway. Montgomery retired from NATO in 1958, and wrote his memoirs, in which he belittled and insulted his comrades in past actions.

RAIN IN THE DISTANCE, by Suzanne Falkiner (Penguin; $5.95 paper). A spare, acute autobiography by a restless Australian. As a child on a New South Wales sheep station, she picks out the Southern Cross on a humid summer night and feels irritated: "Too Australian." Years later, in El Salvador, she diagnoses her abiding trouble as a "fear of the cul-de-sac." A map of her travels, from Paris to Tierra del Fuego, composes a sort of personal constellation; but by the end of the epilogue it turns out to be a sort of cul-de-sac itself. Suzanne Falkiner, whose fourth work of nonfiction this is, manages recalcitrant material with precision and grace. "The towns grew up around the pubs and police stations," she reports in a four-paragraph summary of a century of Australian colonization; she likens bulky rams, blinkered by fleece and tipped back on their haunches by station hands, to "old gentlemen

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in club chairs." She calls herself "happy" twice, and both times rain is the cause.

MYSTERY AND CRIME

Toll Call, by Stephen Greenleaf (Villard; $16.95). The trouble with which John Marshall Tanner, the San Francisco lawyer turned private investigator, is here called upon to deal strikes awkwardly close to home. Peggy Nettleton, Tanner's priceless secretary, has got herself into the psychological clutches of an anonymous obscene telephone caller. Peggy is so deeply in thrall to her caller that she doesn't really want Tanner to help. No matter; he does help, and gives us one of the most entertaining, and confusing, cases of the several on record. It might be added that the ending hints at the promise of a sequel.

Thursday at Noon, by William F. Brown (St. Martin's; $16.95). A thriller in the purest cliffhanger vein. That is to say, every chapter ends with the hero trapped and facing certain death—a threat that is miraculously removed at the beginning of the following chapter. Mr. Brown's technique is flawless. It could have been learned only by way of a thousand Saturday matinées in the heyday of the silent film. The story is set in Egypt in 1962, and features an alcoholic C.I.A. agent against whom everyone's hand is raised. Except, of course, for the beautiful daughter of a mad Nazi atomic scientist. The publishers themselves seem to have been a bit dazed by Mr. Brown: the jacket copy, in mentioning three of his characters, misspells the surname of each.

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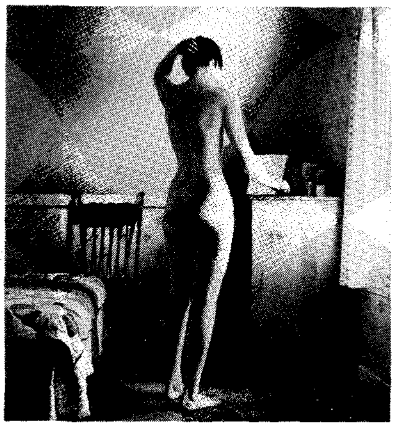

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